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Revolutionizing Home Inspections

- Infrared scanner sees what eyes can't

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Bill Ridgway thought the termites were gone and the leaking roof was fixed.

But an infrared scanning device and acoustic sensors showed problems still existed at the 76-year-old Capitol Street building in Jackson that houses Ridgway Management Inc.

The device, which Peng Lee began developing when he was researcher for the University of Mississippi National Center for Physical Acoustics, allows inspectors to stare through most walls and floors, much like an X-ray. The equipment can spot termites, view electrical wiring, and detect moisture and other pests.

"Technologically, I'm quite impressed because they've shown moisture in a wall that roofers said they they've fixed three times," said Ridgway, secretary



Pam Pybas and Peng Lee of HomeSafe Inspection service of Oxford use an infrared sensor to screen problems such as moisture behind walls Monday afternoon in Judy Johnson's home in the Belhaven district of Jackson.

How it works

The technology works in part by reading the

and treasurer of the company.

Despite the roofer's best efforts, the infrared scanner found the moisture because it can pick up things human eyes can not see.

"It allows us to see what we heretofore have not been able to see," Ridgway said.

temperature differences inside a wall and allowing inspectors to view "distinctive patterns," left by termites.

Insertion of an acoustic probe into areas where termite habitats have been found gives an audio confirmation of their presence.

The patented technology is used by Oxford-based HomeSafe Inspection Inc.

Peng Lee began working on the device while at Ole Miss and finished it after becoming co-owner of HomeSafe Inspection. "My goal is to see the homeowner get the best service," said Lee.

Lee estimates as much as \$700,000 was spent by the school to develop the technology. In exchange, Ole Miss will receive royalty payments from a portion of the proceeds home inspectors earn on the device. The school also holds the patent.

Originally the device was created to detect termites, but it now goes beyond that.

"In fact, we can find rats, mice, termites. We can find a lot of things," said Kevin Seddon, president of HomeSafe Inspection. "We'll see structural concerns, moisture problems."

Ron Brown, owner of Mr. Brown's Pest Services Inc. in Jackson, watched as the device was used at Ridgway Management's building. He said the device has potential.

"This device, under the right conditions, can help show where they are," said Brown, secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Pest Control Association. "It adds another level of checking. I think overall it's something that will be of use to homeowners — consumers."

Ridgeland home inspector Pam Pybas, the only person trained and licensed to use the device in this region, will start making it part of her regular inspections this week.

It takes me a little more than two hours to physically inspect a 2,000-square-foot structure, and an additional 30 minutes to electronically peer through the ceilings, floors and walls, she said.

"I'm booked this week already. The word is out," Pybas said. "Why would you not want this?"

So far, nine other inspectors have been licensed or plan to be licensed by HomeSafe in Mississippi and surrounding states, Seddon said. He said licensees will have protected areas.