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PMP PestManagement PROFESSIONAL

TERMITES *IN THE* TRENCHES

**PMP's exclusive
termite survey
focuses on control
trends and tips**

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our sponsor
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survey analysis
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advice

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There's no substitution for a thorough inspection

By Dr. Janis Reed, BCE | Control Solutions Inc.



DR. REED is Technical Services Manager, Product Development Team, for Control Solutions Inc.



Recently, a friend of mine, “John,” purchased a new home. The home he sold was in Florida, so he was no stranger to —

and has quite a bit of knowledge and experience with — dealing with termites. His new home is in southern Tennessee, another area where Eastern subterranean termites (*Reticulitermes flavipes*) are common. The new home sits on a large rural lot, and backs up to a beautiful, natural green belt. Because of the home's age and surroundings, John knows it is vulnerable to termite attack. Additionally, he understands the importance of reducing wood-to-soil contact, areas where termites can gain access to the structure, and moisture issues, as well as the overall cryptic nature of termites

As we talked on the phone about his new home and he asked questions about how to protect it from termite invasion, I began to ask John specific questions about the house — the construction, the location, and potential termite entry points. Some questions were easy for him to answer, like when the home was built. Other questions were not so easy. In many cases, the answer was “I don't know”

New technologies are always helpful in termite inspections, but true success will forever hinge on the knowledge and thoroughness during the physical inspection by a professional.

or “I'm not really sure.” Even though he understands so much about the importance of termite management, John's knowledge of the many details relating to the construction of the home and other details of what I, a professional, wanted to know about the home was limited. I could tell he was hoping for a simple answer and a quick product recommendation.

To me, this exchange reinforces the importance of an in-person inspection of our customer's property. Until I am able to physically visit John's property, there are so many of his questions I can't answer. By the end of the phone conversation, I think I helped him understand a pest management professional's (PMP's) expertise is not merely in product selection and application, but more important, in the overall reason and thought process behind making, or not making, an insecticide application.

Ultimately, I offered to conduct a virtual inspection of John's new home using a combination of video chat and photos, and I encouraged him to get in contact with a local professional who can provide a detailed inspection and offer a termite protection contract once he is fully settled into his home.

Our team at Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) strives every day to bring our industry innovative, differentiated, and economical products and tools to help PMPs manage termite infestations. Modern PMPs have much that is asked of them, and expectations are high when structural protection is on the line. The depth and breadth of products, techniques, and limitations we work within every day when providing termite management can be overwhelming, and they continue to grow each year. Additionally, customer expectations remain a moving target.

With all of this in mind, CSI will continue to innovate and provide PMPs with an ever-growing toolbox to employ during their daily battles in *all* pest situations, especially difficult termite infestations.



TERMITES *IN THE* TRENCHES

Because customers rely on pros for protection, PMPs find the work satisfying and lucrative

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor

There's no better example of pest management professionals (PMPs) protecting property than termite control work. Each year, these pests are responsible for structural damage that costs property owners billions of dollars, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Termite control work also is lucrative, as property owners rarely opt for do-it-yourself solutions.

"Termite work is extremely rewarding because we're protecting property," says Tom Sieminski, president of Team Pest Control in Sayville, N.Y. "People need to have a professional solve this problem, and that makes me feel like a knight in shining armor."



TOM SIEMINSKI

Of the PMPs who responded to *Pest Management Professional's (PMP's)* 2020 Termite Management Survey, 95 percent expect termite jobs to increase this year. For Tom Korkames, owner of Protech Termite & Pest Service in Bristow, Okla., termite management has been a lucrative — and significant — segment of his business. But weather, the housing market, and the effectiveness of control solutions all have an impact on termite management work.

"For the past 12 years, termite work either goes up or down," he explains.

"We have years where we cannot keep up, and we have very slow years, depending on termite activity."

Jeff Annis, chairman of Advanced Services in Martinez, Calif., predicts

termite renewal revenue will rise in 2020 because of his company's work in new construction over recent years.

"The real estate marketplace is fairly vibrant in our market, so resales of existing homes will create some opportunities," he adds.

Jimmy Arnold, owner and president of Peachtree Services, Brunswick, Ga., also expects 2020 to be another good year: "As long as the economy stays strong and housing prices stay up, we anticipate the real estate market to be a driving force for termite revenue increases."

Arnold says termite swarms help boost business, too. Warmer fall weather and a decent amount of rain resulted in more termite swarms than usual in the fall in the southeast, where his company is located.

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SWARMLESS, YET SUCCESSFUL

PMPs who cannot rely on swarms for more business — and only 21 percent of the PMPs who answered our survey said they gained more than 25 percent of their new termite jobs due to swarms — have other options.

Sieminski advises collecting renewals early in the year, such as February or March.

“In the northeast, residential work is slim,” he says. “Why not send your renewals out then so money can flow at a traditionally slow time?”

According to survey respondents, the majority of termite control work comes from existing residential structures. While 63 percent of those asked said they generate more than half of their termite management revenue this way, new home building elicited the same response from only 3 percent, existing commercial structures from 7 percent and new commercial building from 2 percent.

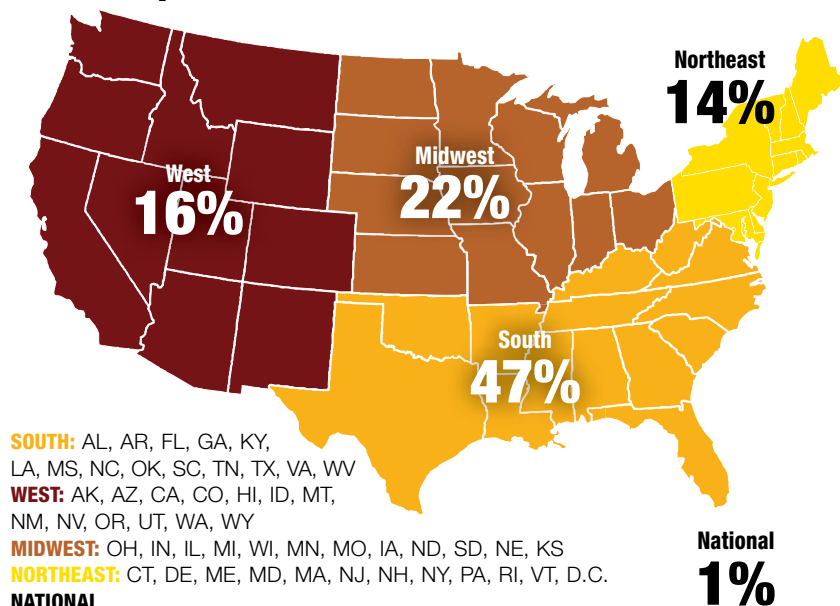
Arnold says termite work is satisfying because it resolves a problem for customers. It also is lucrative, as termite control is his company’s largest revenue category.

“The margins on termite work are generally much higher than other services,” he says.

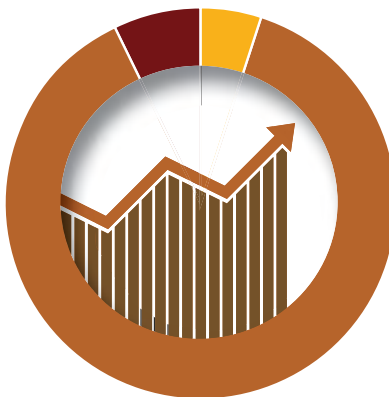
PMPs who offer termite management services consider it a money maker when the work is priced appropriately. But “don’t race others to the bottom of the price scale,” advises Annis. “I have seen many who tried to compete on prices over my past

TERMITE MANAGEMENT SURVEY

Area of Operations



Projected 2020 Termite Job Growth Rates



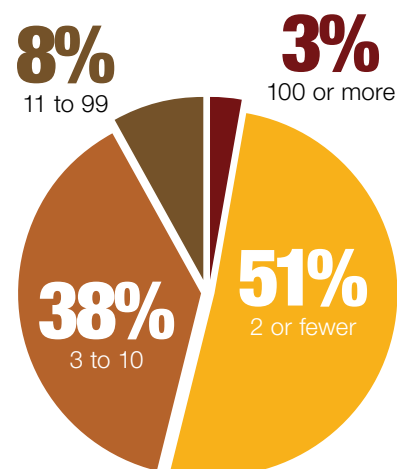
5% expect their number of termite control jobs to remain flat.

88% expect their number of termite control jobs to grow at a rate of 1% to 20%.

7% expect their number of termite control jobs to grow at a rate of 21% or more.

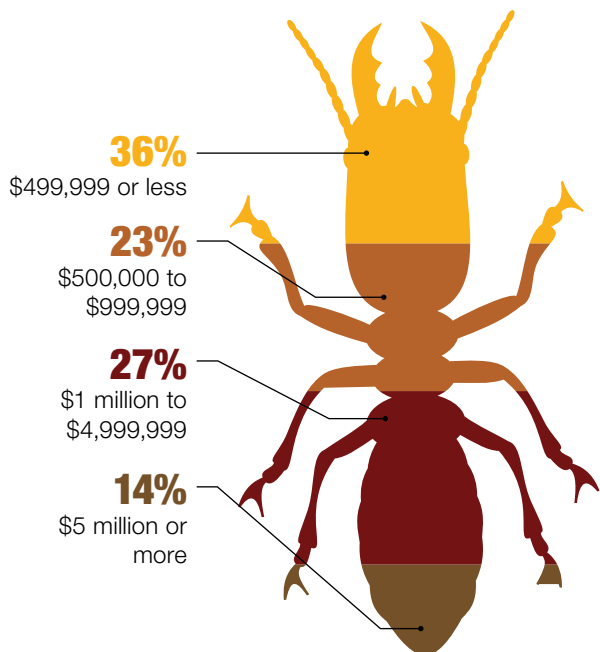
More than 25 percent of new termite jobs in 2019 were triggered by swarms, say 21 percent of survey respondents.

Number of Termite Techs

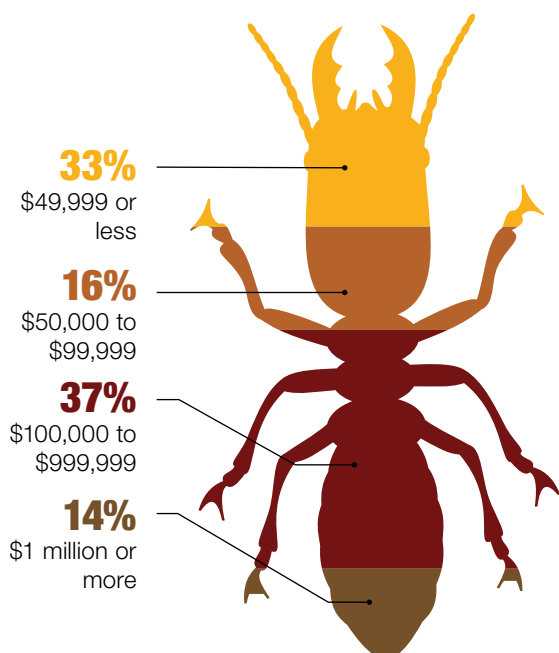




Projected 2020 Total Revenue



Projected 2020 Termite Management Revenue



44 years as a business owner, and those people come and go. The people who represent high value and high quality seem to make it.”

Unlike the weather and new home construction, PMPs can control pricing, and it is key to maintaining a lucrative termite management business.



JEFF ANNIS

“We need to receive appropriate payment for the services you deliver,” Annis says. “Our technicians are well paid and have many great benefits compared to other companies, and that increases our costs and our prices at the same time.”

PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE

Advanced Services employs four associates with Associate Certified Entomologist (ACE) designations, several staff members who are state certified, and dozens of other well trained and experienced technicians and staff members.

“Our customers love us because of the higher-than-average quality of our team members,” Annis says. “If someone does not want to pay the price of having a true professional do the work, there are 65+ run-of-the-mill companies they can choose from. In the end, the quality of your customers will be determined by the quality of your services and the appropriateness of your pricing structure.”

Training your general pest control technicians to look for termite damage during inspections also can be profitable. Training is especially critical, however, when it comes to proper species identification.

Referrals are a great way to build a termite control business, so be sure to maintain good relationships with your existing customers. And when treating a residence for termites, call on the neighbors. Let them know you are available in case they develop termite problems of their own.

“Teaching customers about termite biology and available strategies provides a wonderful opportunity to solve control problems and spotlights our knowledge, care and professionalism to our customers,” Sieminski says.

In his eyes, the process includes being a teacher first as you explain termite biology and control strategies, acting as a psychologist next as you offer

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empathy for their termite troubles, and moving into sales mode last by providing pricing and warranty information.

Thorough inspections are critical to providing quality termite work. Look for structural damage, shelter tubes and frass. Seek out evidence of swarmers, such as shed wings. Inspections should include all areas of the structure, including the garage, attic, basement and/or crawlspace. Areas adjacent to the property, such as landscaping, sheds and wood piles should be checked as well. Moisture meters, infrared cameras, optical borescopes and methane detectors are just a few of the tools that ensure inspections are thorough.

Document the conditions of the structure you inspect because a historical record of previous damage — or more important, no damage at all — will facilitate the detection of new infestations. Accurate records also are needed when offering warranties on work performed.



JIMMY ARNOLD

“Conduct proper inspections, create documentation and graphs, and maintain good files and history for each account,” Arnold says. “With today’s technology, there is no reason all of these cannot be accomplished.”

Spray foam insulation makes termite inspections more of a challenge. That’s because termites are capable of penetrating spray foam insulation, and when that happens, termites and the damage they cause become more difficult to detect. Be sure existing customers understand that if they install spray foam insulation, they may void their warranties.

MORE ONLINE

On our YouTube channel, watch PMP columnist Dr. Jim Fredericks, VP of technical and regulatory affairs for the National Pest Management Association, discuss how spray foam insulation affects termite inspections.

done by a well-trained and properly supported technician,” he adds. “Nobody wins if termites get into the structure and damage takes place.” PMP

Annual inspections will help PMPs stay on top of any termite issues that may arise, Annis says.

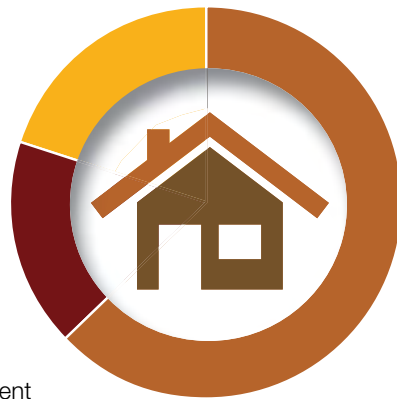
“The customer and the company both win with a thorough annual inspection

Termite Management Revenue from Existing Residential Structures

63% generate more than half of their termite management revenue by servicing existing residential structures.

17% generate one-quarter to one-half of their termite management revenue by servicing existing residential structures.

20% generate less than one-quarter of their termite management revenue by servicing existing residential structures.



Projected 2020 Termite Management Revenue from Liquid Treatments

59% expect to generate more than half of their termite management revenue from liquid treatments.

9% expect to generate one-quarter to one-half of their termite management revenue from liquid treatments.

32% expect to generate less than one-quarter of their termite management revenue from liquid treatments.

Species Generating Termite Work

EASTERN SUBTERRANEAN TERMITES (*Reticulitermes flavipes*)

DRYWOOD TERMITES (*Cryptotermes spp.*)

FORMOSAN TERMITES (*Coptotermes formosanus*)

WESTERN SUBTERRANEAN TERMITES (*R. hesperus*)

You can reach SOFRANEC at dsfranec@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3793.

SOURCE: PMP 2020 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY

ILLUSTRATION: CHRUPKA/ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS/GETTY IMAGES



TRIED-AND-TRUE TERMITE CONTROL ADVICE

10 tips to help take your termite control work to the next level

By **Diane Sofranec** | PMP Senior Editor

1 Ask for referrals, and reward customers who provide them.

— *Tony DeJesus, Vice President, Big Blue Bug Solutions, Providence, R.I.*



2 Explain to customers how much damage termites can do in one year.

— *Neal Lalman, America's Best Pest Control, Marble Falls, Texas*



3 Let your general pest control customers know you also offer termite treatments. Send with every invoice a flier about your termite management services.

— *Don Wood, Co-owner, Bestway Pest Management, Knoxville, Tenn.*



4 Make sure all of your people — from office staff to technician, to management, to sales staff — know where you stand on doing termite business the right way. What your customers say about you gets around.

— *Randal Dawson, Director of Operations, DC Scientific Pest Control, Tuscaloosa, Ala.*



5 Market to Realtors — they can be your best salespeople.

— *Chris Baumbach, Pinnacle Pest Defense, New Braunfels, Texas*



6 Explain to customers the value of your termite control services, and the advantages of keeping the warranty service in place.

— *Jeff Annis, Founder, Advanced Services, Augusta, Ga.*

7 Always show the value of your services. Don't be afraid to ask for the business.

— *Kevin Citarella, President, Citarella Termite & Pest Management, Spring Hill, Fla.*



8 Have all of your general pest control technicians conduct termite inspections as they

perform their regular services.

— *Andrea Mooberry, Owner, American Pest Control, Hanna City, Ill.*

9 Take pictures of issues in crawlspaces and around structures, and integrate them into your sales presentations. Draw graphs to use as sales tools.

— *Philip Smith, President, Compass Pest Management, Baldwin, Ga.*

10 Price for profit, not just to land the job.

— *Robert Gordon, President, Gordon Termite Control, Bellflower, Calif.*





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