



Choosing Houses for Field Training

The houses you choose for field training events will have a huge impact on the success of the training. It's worth your time to locate the best houses possible so your event goes smoothly and so everyone will get as much as possible out of the event. Most the work you'll do in setting up houses for field training should take place long before the training takes place.

The best homes for training events will include components that are similar to those that are usually seen by the students being trained. Choose homes that are typical to your region, unless you specifically want to train on some unusual feature. Avoid one-of-a-kind homes if possible.

Look For These Homes

- Located close to the classroom or office – no more than one-half hour away.
- No major remodel jobs in progress. You can't pressure-test a house full of holes, you don't want to be asked to complete their work, and you don't want to be held responsible for their construction mess.
- No recently built homes that are under builder's warranty, since you WILL find problems that could be embarrassing to the builder.
- The owner doesn't have excessive furnishings that inhibit access to parts of the home, or many precious belongings that you could break. Empty homes are best. Duplexes are preferable for large classes.
- Good parking is available for everyone's vehicles. Car-pool to the site if possible.
- A forced air heating system if this is the most common equipment in your region. Hydronic heat is OK if you do see some of these systems.
- Open-combustion heating equipment – old and inefficient systems give you more to show and test.
- Exposed duct work is best, as in an unfinished basement. Don't try to train on ductwork in a low or muddy crawl space, or in a very tight attic.
- An open attic with an accessible hatch. Partial vaulted ceilings are OK.

Back-Up Houses

You must have back-up houses available to provide assurance that your training event can continue if you run into a problem. It's always worth the effort to arrange back-ups even if you don't use them in the end.

If you expect to need one home, make arrangements to use two. If you need a new home for each day of a weeklong training event, you should probably have at least three back-ups. If you're responsible for choosing homes, but you're not the primary trainer, you should take the trainer out to preview the homes before the day of the training event. Your chosen house could fail to work out for many reasons: the owner changes their mind, the primary trainer doesn't approve of the house, or the equipment needed for training on a particular home isn't available on the day of the training.

Communicating with the Homeowner

Be sure the owner knows what to expect during the training event. Tell them what you're trying to accomplish, what time you'll arrive and leave, and how many people to expect. Discuss their expectations about the use of their bathroom by students. Talk to them about protecting their home with drop-clothes. Promise them that you'll clean up any mess you make, then do so.

Getting to the House

On the day of the event, discuss your plan and expectations with the students. Print out maps to the house for the drivers, then reiterate in person how to get there. Agree on the time you'll arrive at the house. If you are the crew leader or trainer, arrange to arrive slightly ahead of the students so you can meet the owner and discuss the day's work before the entire class descends on their home.

Protecting the House

You'll gain a lot of respect and cooperation from the homeowner if you take care of their home. This is true no matter how disorganized or dirty you perceive the home to be. You should bring these items:

- Tarps to cover the floors where appropriate. Long skinny painter's tarps work well as runners.
- Floor mats for wiping feet and/or disposable booties if necessary. Some owners may expect you to work in your bare feet or to wear booties.
- Broom, dust pan, mop, rags, and other cleaning supplies.

Assign someone the task of cleaning up when you are done. This should be the last person in the house, and they may need to stay a few minutes longer than the rest of the group to complete the job. They should ask the homeowner to confirm that the cleanup is sufficient, and be prepared to clean as needed to meet the homeowner's expectations.