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## ***The Home Seller's Guide to Professional Home Inspection***

This guide will help make the process of having your home inspected as easy and smooth as possible by answering the most commonly asked questions about home inspection and by providing helpful information on how to prepare your home to be inspected.

### **What is a professional home inspection?**

A professional home inspection is a primarily visual examination of the visible, safely accessible and readily accessible components of the interior, exterior, structural, roof, electrical, heating, cooling, and plumbing systems of a home for conditions that are currently adversely affecting the normally intended function or operation of those systems and their components.

The information that's developed from the inspection is documented in a written report along with recommendations for appropriate actions to address the conditions noted in the report and the report presented to the inspector's customer. The written report will also describe locations of main water, gas, and electrical shut-offs as well as certain materials and methods of installation and construction used in the home.

In the course of performing the inspection the inspector will typically give the home buyer maintenance information to assist them in caring for and getting the most out of, what will soon be, their new home. Some professional home inspectors also include the kitchen appliances in their inspections and some provide other services such as testing for radon gas, swimming pool inspection, and mold testing.

### **What does an inspector do?**

While each inspector will bring a unique point of view to an inspection, all professional home inspectors cover the same areas. They will inspect the exterior including walking the roof to inspect the roof covering materials and the other components above the roof line when it's safe to do so. They will examine the eave gutters, downspouts, chimneys, grading, drainage, driveways, walkways, porches, decks, balconies, patios, exterior wall claddings, and other exterior components.

They will inspect the plumbing, electrical, heating, and cooling systems including the operation of plumbing fixtures and water heaters. Inspectors examine the interiors of electrical system main and sub distribution panels and the operation of heating and cooling equipment including, in some instances, removal of heating and cooling equipment access panels to permit closer examination of interior components. They will inspect solid-fuel heating appliances such as wood stoves and fireplaces. Inspectors may enter under-building crawl spaces and attic spaces; open closets, cabinets, and cupboards; and enter and inspect every room of the home including garages and the function of automatic garage door operators.

A thorough professional home inspection of a typical home may take from two to four hours and it is customary for the buyer to accompany the inspector for part, if not all, of the inspection.

### **Will I receive a copy of the inspection report?**

Typically the home seller will not get a copy of the report. The inspection and report are the property of the party paying for the inspection. If this is the buyer, then it is their report. Unless they authorize release of the report to other parties, only customers are provided with the report by the inspection company.

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## **Can my home “fail” the inspection?**

Absolutely not! Homes don't “pass” or fail” inspections. Homes “speak” for themselves and a good inspector knows how to listen and what to listen for. The inspection report simply documents the conditions noted in the course of the inspection and provides recommendations for appropriate actions to address those conditions. Depending on what the inspector finds, the inspector's recommendations may range from simply monitoring some conditions to addressing others as normal maintenance items to recommending immediate attention for some others. However, a professional home inspector is a disinterested third party and does not get involved in any negotiations between buyers and sellers and does not assign responsibility to either buyers or sellers regarding who is responsible for any recommended corrective measures.

## **Should I be present during the inspection?**

While it may not always be practical, it is better for sellers and occupants to be away during the inspection and, in most cases, sellers or occupants are not present during the inspection. The inspection is the buyer's time to really become familiar with the home under the guidance of the inspector. Buyers typically feel more at ease when they are free to ask the inspector questions or to make comments and observations in an uninhibited atmosphere. If you need to leave special instructions for the inspector, they are best communicated through your agent or you can leave written instructions for the inspector.

If you must be home during the inspection, keep in mind that the buyer is paying for the inspector's time and expertise. Following along or “chatting” with the inspector or the buyer consumes their time and it may make the buyer uncomfortable. It is always best if you go about your normal daily routine and allow the inspector and the buyer to proceed through the house unaccompanied and uninterrupted from start to finish.

## **Can I get my home ready for an inspection?**

By all means! Not only *can* a home be prepared for an inspection, it *should* be prepared for an inspection. When your home is properly prepared for an inspection, everyone benefits. It makes it easier for the inspector, reduces the time required to conduct the inspection, and shows consideration for the buyer's time as well. The results are not only fewer headaches for the inspector but also fewer disruptions and less inconvenience for you.

## **What should I do to prepare my home for an inspection?**

Remove obstacles that may block the inspector's access to the following:

- Electrical panels
- Heating and cooling equipment
- Water heaters
- Under-building crawl space access
- Attic space access (this includes removing clothing and other personal property which may impede access through a closet or garage)
- Under-sink areas
- Ground fault interrupter type electrical receptacle outlets
- Kitchen sinks
- Dishwashers
- Ranges and ovens
- Interior areas including garages and basements
- Any locked item or area (remove locks, unlock doors and gates, or provide keys or other means of access so that the inspector can have access to yards and can open electrical panels, storage rooms, etc.)
- Fireplaces

Take measures to kennel, cage, or otherwise remove pets that cannot be let out, that may harm the inspector or others present at the inspection, or that may be harmed by the inspection.

All space heating and water heating equipment should be operational (this means that standing pilot lights must be lit and that gas and fuel oil-fired equipment supply valves must be open). All systems (water, gas, and electrical) should be on. If the inspector finds electrical circuit breakers in the off position, standing pilot lights unlit, gas or oil valves, water stops, or main water supply valves shut off or other essential or major component controls disabled, the inspector will assume that they are in such condition for a reason and the written report will state that they are *inoperable*.

If the inspector operates a light switch for a permanently installed light fixture and the fixture has a burned out light bulb or no light bulb at all, the inspection report may state that the light was inoperable and may recommend further evaluation by a qualified electrician. To avoid this, replace burned out light bulbs or missing light bulbs in permanent light fixtures before the inspection.

Having clean eave gutters and properly extended downspouts, a roof that's in good repair, a clean furnace/air-conditioning system filter, proper labeling of all of the circuits in the electrical panel, and intact cover plates on all electrical switches and receptacle outlets all reduce the number of conditions an inspector will otherwise have to include in the report.

Finally, think about what appeals to you when you look at a home – curb appeal, a neat and trimmed yard, a well-painted exterior and interior, clean carpets and floors, a garage or carport that is neat and roomy, uncluttered kitchen and bathroom countertops, etc. Talk with your real estate professional. Your agent is an experienced and knowledgeable professional and can give you tips on how to help your home present its best face, both inside and out.

Inspectors aren't drill sergeants and they do not come to a home to perform a military "white glove" inspection. However, an environment that's neat and easy to move about in will best present your home to the buyer and will make the entire inspection process more enjoyable for everyone.

### **What about after the inspection?**

Sit back and relax. Your agent or representative will assist you in the process after the inspection. Remember, competent professional home inspectors provide their customers with unbiased and clear information. They put the conditions noted in the course of their inspections in perspective. This allows buyers to make calm and informed decisions about the information in the inspection report. Experience has shown that most buyers aren't obsessive perfectionists. Unless there are significant conditions which require immediate modifications or corrective measures, they typically understand that your home is where people just like them live and they anticipate a reasonable amount "normal wear and tear" and minor deferred maintenance.