



Home Inspectors' Top Ten Findings

As a buyer, you have probably heard over and over again how important a home inspection is in the home-buying process. Home inspectors need to be certified and come with many good recommendations. The security and health of your family depend on their attention to detail and ability to see things that are not visible to most other people.

When you are preparing to purchase a new home, the information provided in a home-inspection report is critical for protecting your family. Here are the top ten findings of home inspectors, and what can be done to resolve the issues:

Inadequate Drainage

In most cases, you will realize that a home has inadequate drainage long before you purchase it. You will probably smell dampness or see visible water damage along the walls of basement or crawlspace. If a home inspector indicates that a home's drainage is inadequate, you will probably need to repair or replace downspouts and gutters. You may also need to install French drains or, in extreme circumstances, you might have to level the entire lot to facilitate proper drainage.

Out-of-Code Electrical System

This is a very common finding in home-inspection reports. The problem with bad wiring is that it presents a risk of fire and other problems, including ruined appliances and electronics. In general, an electrical system will need to be brought up to code before an occupancy permit can be issued for a home.

Leaking and Damaged Roof

A home inspector will check a home's roof carefully to inspect the materials for aging and possible damage. In general, roofing materials can be replaced in small sections. Unless there is significant damage, a complete new roof will not be required.


Dysfunctional Heating System

A dysfunctional heating system can be a significant danger for the home's inhabitants. Most of the time, this sort of finding warrants replacing the heating system. The good news for home owners is that furnace installations are relatively inexpensive. In addition, modern furnaces are much more efficient than those made in the past. A new heating system will most likely pay for itself in a few years, thanks to its lower utility costs.


Overall Poor Condition

An indication of overall poor condition means that the previous owners did not keep up on home maintenance. Some of the indicators of poor condition might include haphazard repairs to the electrical system or plumbing, cracked walls, peeling paint, broken light fixtures, or non-working switches and

outlets. There might also be water damage or problems with the home's foundation.



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Structural Damage (Minor)

Most minor structural problems are easy to repair and do not pose a danger to the home's inhabitants. The leading cause of minor structural damage is water damage. Water that comes into the home through windows, doors, or cracks in the foundation will cause minor structural problems.

Plumbing Problems

A home's plumbing should be up to code and composed of new materials wherever possible. If a home inspector finds rusting pipes, lead-based materials, or broken fixtures, he or she will probably put these items on the home-inspection report.

Drafts

A home inspector will check to see whether the windows and doors of a home let air pass through. If this is a problem, it can usually be fixed by re-glazing windows and applying silicone caulking around the openings.

Ventilation Problems

If a home seems to have a problem regulating moisture, chances are that the home inspector will indicate that there are ventilation problems. This situation can be alleviated by installing fans and/or by adding windows that can be opened to bring fresh air into the home. Attics require adequate ventilation for heat efficiency.

Environmental Hazards

Few home inspectors specialize in environmental hazards. Therefore, it is a good idea to have environmental inspectors assess the home for hidden dangers either before or after the home inspector has finished his or her portion of the inspection. Here is a list of some of the types of environmental hazards that may be present in homes:

- **Lead-Based Paint:** The presence of lead-based paint is extremely dangerous, yet a typical home inspector may not be able to locate the problem. A special test must be performed to determine whether lead-based paint is present in a home. Removing the danger involves a process through which the walls are either sealed or removed and replaced. Lead poisoning is dangerous and can be fatal to young children.
- **Radon Gas:** A typical home inspector will probably not be able to detect the presence of this odorless and colorless gas that is known to cause cancer. If radon is discovered in a home, a mitigation pump will need to be installed to remove the gas. This installation is expensive.
- **Drinking Water Issues:** A water test can determine the purity of your home's water supply. Correcting problems with the drinking water range from simple pipe replacement to the replacement of the entire home plumbing system, depending on the source of the problem.
- **Leaking or Damaged Heating Oil Tanks:** A home inspector or heating system inspector should be able to spot a faulty oil storage tank. Replacement is generally the only acceptable solution, but it is very expensive.

Conclusion

Now that you are familiar with the top ten problems that home inspectors find, you are better prepared to react to the presence of such problems. You might be comfortable replacing a few missing roof shingles, but if the home has several of the problems described above, talk with the owners to find out how much they are willing to contribute to fix those problems. They could offer to pay for repairs and updates directly, or they could agree to lower the home's purchase price.

Ask your realtor for a recommendation for a local home inspector who is properly certified. A home inspection is important for the health and safety of you and your family, and therefore the inspector should be chosen based upon the knowledgeable recommendations that you receive from others.

Knowing what to expect from a home inspection will make you a better homebuyer and a better homeowner. Never skip the home inspection, because that would be like buying a vehicle sight-unseen. You need to keep your family's best interests in mind. A home-inspection report that reveals significant problems is usually an acceptable reason for a buyer to back out of a sale. Therefore, keep that in mind if you are unable or unwilling to do what is necessary to repair the flaws, backing out of the deal is one of your rights as a potential buyer.