

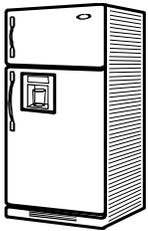
# Valley Voice

OK Valley Home Inspections *It's All About Knowledge*

A newsletter is for **REALTORS** and **LISTING HOMEOWNERS** to help everyone survive a home inspection. If too many smaller concerns show up, the end result can be negative, even though the house is sound! In each issue, we will identify many of the concerns that are often overlooked.

## KITCHEN APPLIANCE INSPECTIONS

Inspectors are not required to inspect, operate or determine the condition, age or life expectancy of appliances in a home. Most of us do it as a courtesy only, and to determine the power source, drainage, venting or electrical services. I want to make it clear, most inspectors check fundamental operation only, not performance. The client should inquire with the seller regarding performance of all appliances.



**Refrigerators:** There is not too much to check for in most cases; short of ensuring that the items inside are cold or frozen. For the larger top-motor mounted units, we open the doors and GENTLY pull down on them. If the refer moves, the anti-tip device was not installed or is loose.

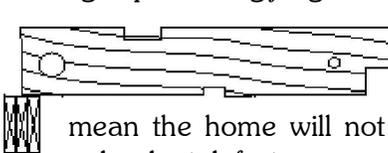
**Dishwashers:** Always look inside the unit before running a dishwasher. I have found them used for storage, including cookbooks and other personal items. We check for deterioration near the pump and at the bottom of the door. I operate the dishwasher with a short cycle and then drain the unit and check for leaks. The door is opened fully and pushed down to ensure the unit will not tip if someone places an item on the door.

**Ranges and Ovens:** Again, we always look inside prior to operating. We look for cracked glass and deteriorated gaskets and any obvious damage. Then we turn on the upper and lower burners or elements on to check for 220V power.



## NOTCHING & BORING IN BEAMS AND JOISTS

In most houses it is necessary to notch and bore at least some of the joists and beams in the basement during construction or basic home improvement. Inspecting framing requires using judgment and common sense. Just



because the hole or notch is a bit larger than recommended does not mean the home will not perform. We look for redundant defects or severe cutting or damage that can weaken the building. Originally, most damage was blamed on a plumber or HVAC technician, but now it's a handyman homeowner. Depending on the seriousness of the concern, the inspector may ask you to have it evaluated by an engineer or similar professional.

## AIR CONDITIONER CONDENSATE DRAINS

A built-in, whole-house air conditioner usually has two main components. One part is inside the furnace and one part is outside the house, usually on the ground. One of the by-products of an A/C system is water. Most manufacturers of air conditioning units suggest a "P" trap somewhere on the drain line to prevent insects from entering the air handler through the condensate line; however, it is not required by any local code.

Most of the time A/C condensate water flows by gravity to a floor drain thru a PVC pipe. The termination is usually visible, but that is not a requirement. Other common locations for the A/C drain are; the water heater pan, the washing machine drain, on-the-wall standpipes, the laundry sink and sometimes, it's simply a large bucket on the floor.



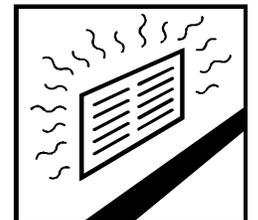
Electric pumps are used where a drain is not available. These little (blue and white) pumps lift the water to an approved location once the tank is filled to a predetermined level. Evidence of these pumps usually signals the inspector that there is no floor drain near the furnace. I caution my clients of this should a water leak or overflow situation ever occur. Make sure the electrical connector cannot be accidentally unplugged.

## SAFETY HAZARD

Some doors have **deadbolt** locks that need a **key** to be opened from the INSIDE. Finding the key when there is an emergency such as a fire could have bad results. Replace this type of lock with one with a knob!

## CRAWLSPACES

Many crawlspaces have vent openings on the outside walls that should be opened in summer and closed in winter. Sometimes these are blocked or damaged. Clean or replace these vents to ensure proper ventilation. Check the screens so insects, bugs and rodents can't enter. The best ones slide open from the outside.



If interested in time-dating appliances, please look at [www.appliance411.com/service/date-code.php](http://www.appliance411.com/service/date-code.php)

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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF "A HOME INSPECTOR"

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**A**bout a month after I completed an inspection on a home in the south Okanagan, the new owners called regarding a musty smell in their basement. I returned to the home to investigate the source which seemed to come from a small storage room in the basement. I was told that the previous owner had recently "fixed a moisture problem" in that area which was not disclosed earlier.

The walls were drywall and the floor had a vinyl covering over concrete. I ran a moisture meter over the walls and physically removed a drywall panel that was on one of the outside walls. The insulation was dry and vapour barrier was in place. I lifted a corner of the vinyl flooring and **there it was....** a substance that had a typical odour and colour, consistent with mould or mildew. I also discovered a 10 cm. floor drain that was loosely closed with a compression plug carefully hidden under the vinyl. There was a bathroom with an elevated shower adjacent to the storage room, and the room itself was in a corner of the basement, nestled between two outside walls. Any or all of these could be the source of moisture under the vinyl - as could ground water (there was a swimming pool in the yard) and water from any of the bathrooms or hose bibs above or near the storage room. I checked the outside drainage... gutters and drain pipes were in tact and drained more than five meters from the basement walls. A hose bib was visible but it did not appear to be leaking.

This left a variety of possible internal water sources. I flushed the toilet in the adjacent bathroom and observed the water in the newly found floor drain... no significant movement. I plugged the drain in the shower, filled it with 10 cm. of water and let it sit for an extended period of time... no leaks. I drained the shower pan and flushed the toilet at the same time and observed the water level in

the floor drain a second time... again, no significant activity. I also checked the water meter to see if there was any movement of the dial. Nothing seemed to indicate an **active source of water** under the vinyl.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

So what can be done now? I cautioned my clients to leave the room alone without disturbing the vinyl or any of the stained areas. I contacted a local plumber to inquire why a floor drain would possibly be blocked with a compression plug. His suggestion was that there may be a back-flow situation due to either faulty plumbing, incorrect plumbing connections, high water table, damaged weeping tile, collapsed piping, etc.

Often, unexplained water activity can be something that only happens by actually living in the home and doing things. This includes, for example, flushing toilets and emptying the dishwasher at the same time. Perhaps drainage pipes were incorrectly installed, plugged or broken and water after a heavy rain is backflowing into the home. Combinations of several activities may have to take place for the water to appear.

To speed the examination process, I suggested contacting the previous owner of the property to determine: (1) the extent of water infiltration that was observed by him prior to the first fix (2) the probable source of the moisture, and (3) what was done to eliminate the concern. Then call a plumber!

## ... BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MOULD?

From an inspectors point of view, homeowners should not be encouraged to deal with large amounts of mould. There are guidelines printed at length which suggest the limits for home clean-up. Should the homeowner decide on a do-it-yourself clean-up, there are products for mould remediation which can be used to kill, reduce or eliminate the spread of spores and prevent re-occurrence (once the moisture situation is resolved). Bleach is not suggested (by me) as it is toxic and nauseous and in most cases, has not been shown to completely eliminate mould or its re-occurrence.

A better option is a product called "Concrobium Mold Control" (available from many home improvement centres). See the notes on their website ([www.ConcrobiumMoldControl.com](http://www.ConcrobiumMoldControl.com)) as well as various articles on mould at [www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca).

Wear suitable masks, gloves, protective clothing and use a lot of common sense. Try to isolate the area from drafts to keep airborne spores from spreading throughout the house.



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