

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

Valley Voice

A newsletter for **REALTORS, MORTGAGE LENDERS, HOMEOWNERS** - Deal Closing 101

Home staging, curb appeal, painting and de-cluttering, all contribute to the successful sale of a home. But what happens to the “deal” when an buyer learns about undetected problems just before closing? You can improve the chances of keeping the deal alive by booking a “pre-listing inspection” performed by a provincially licensed Inspector.

We are pleased to publish the tenth in this series of newsletters, discussing concerns that **should** be addressed **before** the purchasers’ Inspection.

LACK OF VENTILATION UNDER DECKS

Most decks are found at the front or rear exterior entrances and are often built over - or within a few feet of soil. Moisture evaporating from the soil is normal, but if it is **trapped** under a deck, it can lead to early deterioration of the wooden structural and decking members. We spend a lot of money and time protecting the top surface of a deck from sun and water, but it is equally important to look after the underside of a deck as well. The simplest fix is to add a vapour barrier over the soil to control evaporation, and equally easy, is the addition of ventilation openings to allow fresh air to enter - and to allow heat or humid air to exit. This could add years to your deck.

HANDRAILS OR GUARDRAILS THAT ARE TOO LOW, LOOSE, DAMAGED OR JUST REQUIRE PAINTING

Any staircase, deck, or stairwell - with a drop of over 60 cm (2 feet) - should have a secure handrail or guardrail or other barrier for support - or to prevent people from falling over and hurting themselves. Inspectors often find poorly maintained or poorly built safety rails. Some are loose at their top edges, loose at the base or loose at the wall junction - and offer little support should someone

trip or fall against them. Others are far too low (minimum height of guardrails is 105 cm (42 inches) and handrails (on stairs) is 90 cm (36 inches). Unpainted or poorly maintained guardrails and handrails will often deteriorate quickly and can give a false sense of security. Inspectors will push, pull, wiggle and jiggle safety rails and comment on their condition in their inspection report.

LOOSE INSULATION ON CONCRETE WALLS OR BETWEEN CEILING JOISTS IN CRAWLSPACES

One of the purposes of crawlspace walls is to give the home a secure base to be built on. The space between walls and under the home, allows some of the heating, plumbing and power services to pass. If the space is not used as living quarters, there is little reason to have this area heated. Unfortunately, much of the exterior of crawlspaces is **above grade** and therefore can get very **cold in winter**. Exterior walls (or the space between the joists just under the living quarters) should be insulated to trap heat and to keep floors warm - we often find thermostatically controlled electric heaters in crawlspaces. Sometimes we discover that insulation has fallen off the walls or fallen down from between the floor joists. This is an instant source of cold floors and heat loss. I encourage owners to check the crawlspace annually and re-secure insulation that has fallen or become loose.

DAMAGED, MISSING OR VERY OLD ASPHALT ROOF SHINGLES

Roofing shingles have to be in very bad condition before they leak. Most shingles overlap at least one other shingle and some even have a water barrier between the shingle and the sub-roof material. Most roof leaks actually happen at places where something penetrates through the roof - such as plumbing vents, chimneys, antennae or ventillation covers.

Shingles can be blown off in strong winds, leaving a poorly protected half-shingle underneath. As shingles get older, granules wear off exposing the tar and paper material which makes up the construction of the shingles to damaging sun exposure. Finally, older shingles get brittle and break easily, they can shrink and curl at their edges. Inspectors will consider all these factors when determining the age remaining of a roof system.

ATTIC SCUTTLES (HATCH COVERS) THAT ARE NOT INSULATED OR NOT PROPERLY WEATHERSTRIPPED

An attic is simply the space between the roof (designed to shed water and snow) and the ceiling of the living quarters. Most have no practical purpose as either a room or as a storage area. Builders take advantage of this space, mainly to run wiring and add insulation. Unfortunately, this area is often closed up **too tight** and problems can occur. Two of the more significant problems in an attic include: trapped heat and trapped moisture - both of which can be addressed by proper venting. But how do we prevent excessive heat and moisture? Heat can be controlled by using a lighter colored shingle or tile (more on this next issue). Moisture, however; can be controlled. Moisture usually comes from within the home as humidity. There are numerous openings between the home and the attic which should be properly sealed with caulking or tape.

Unfortunately, most of these areas are not easily accessible by the homeowner. The single largest accessible opening is the attic hatch. Make sure that this is insulated to **keep heat "IN"** the home and ensure that there is an air-tight fit (weatherstripping) around the edges of the cover, preventing the flow of air between the home and the attic.

SEAL CRACKS IN KITCHEN COUNTER JOINTS. CAULK COUNTER TO WALL AND SINK TO COUNTER JUNCTIONS

Water in the wrong place is a serious concern in any home. Sinks can spill over, taps leak and homeowners, while cleaning the counter, can add or push water where it does not belong. Most counters with a laminate countertop have a wood base under the finished surface. It is important to ensure that all openings **around a sink** and **cracks and openings** anywhere on the surface and at junctions, should be sealed or filled with a water resistant filler (such as silicone or mould-resistant caulking)

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF "A HOME INSPECTOR"

I inspected a home the other day that had a tar and gravel roof. Even in this part of the province, with all our heat and so little rain, it does not seem possible that we would have moss on the surface. This moss was so thick that it was almost impossible to see any gravel, except for the edges of the roof. I did notice that there were a lot of huge trees around the property which prevented the sun from really drying out the surface of the roof. While on the roof, I looked at other homes in the area... some had wood roofs, some had asphalt shingles and some were tar and gravel. **THEY ALL HAD MOSS!** So my client asked, "what can be done?"

First off, there are no positives about having moss on any roof! There are several things that come into play. The slope of the roof, large trees and the sun's exposure, the roof's surface and the direction the roof is sloping. Assuming that most of us cannot easily modify many of

these, we'll probably have to live with it. **BUT**, there are some things that we can do to help us deal with the problem - short of chopping down the trees!

There are chemicals that reduce and kill moss. Be sure it is applied properly and does not harm the environment. A little known trick is to use **zinc strips** (usually from galvanized metal) that actually prevents moss from growing and can kill it over time. These strips are placed about a foot down from a roof ridge and can be nailed in place. On flat roofs, use **zinc pellets**. These are sown like seeds and work like a charm. Call me if you need more information, Kieth.

This is the 10th newsletter in this series.

Having homes inspected before listing may uncover problems that may not have been noticed or disclosed by the current homeowner.

When a **pre-listing inspection** is requested, I will complete a detailed and thorough inspection. When finished, I'll sit down with client and explain the various findings. After concerns have been addressed, I will re-inspect the property (usually at no charge) and revise the original report to reflect the changes.

For back issues of all my newsletters, see www.okvalleyinspector.ca click on the "newsletters" tab.



www.okvalleyinspector.ca
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