

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

# Valley Voice

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

**D**o home-buyers understand how important and valuable a professional home inspection is? A good inspector will let buyers know if any major problems exist and explain why they should be addressed. No one wants to find out about an expensive repair shortly after moving into their new home.

I am pleased to publish the thirteenth in this series of newsletters, discussing concerns that **should** be addressed **before** the purchasers' Inspection.

## WHAT THE HECK IS A DOUBLE TAP?

In order to perform a proper electrical evaluation, home inspectors must remove the electrical panel covers on every accessible electrical panel box. Besides other concerns, inspectors look for breakers that have two (or more) wires attached. The problem with multiple wiring is that additional wiring could put a substantial electrical demand on the breaker. Breakers will **"nuisance trip"** if excessive amperage passes thru them - this prevents overheating and reduces the chance of fire.

Also, most breakers are **NOT** designed to have two wires screwed under a single wire clamp. This could result in loose connections, overheating at the connections and electrical arcing at the screw connection.

**The solution - add another overload protection device so each wire has it's own breaker or, add a special tandem breaker with two screw clamps.**

## PONDING OF LARGE VOLUMES OF WATER ON FLAT OR LOW-SLOPE ROOFS

Although not as common as asphalt single roofs, built-up roofing is commonly found over additions and other low-slope or flat applications. In fact, most office buildings, warehouses and industrial properties have a torch-on or tar-and-gravel roof surface. Not always pretty to look at, this type of roof is quite versatile. However, like most roofing systems, the main cause of surface failure is the

effects or the Okanagan sun and severe weather conditions. All flat roofs should have a slight slope to ensure water runs off the surface. Inspectors often find puddles of water on a roof, indicating improper drainage. Small amounts of water for a short time are acceptable, but, the problem is that many roof surfaces cannot tolerate the strain of the additional weight of standing water. Secondly, a membrane failure under any large volume of water could have devastating results inside the building. Your inspector should be able to determine how long water has been on the roof (it should not exceed 48 hours in this part of BC) and he may be able to identify concerns regarding slope, weight or other damage. **If re-sloping is difficult (or most-likely impossible), a new surface drain or skubber may have to be added.**

## THE GARAGE - PART 1

In our hectic daily routines, it's easy to take our homes for granted. One area that should not be ignored, however, is the garage. Garages can contain a number of hazards dangerous to both your home and your family. Here some potentially hazardous areas to check for in your garage, and tips for making sure you and your family are safe:

### GARAGE DOORS & OPENERS

- All automatic garage door openers should have a safety reverse function. Newer doors will have a photoelectric beam that (when broken) causes the door to stop and then go back up. If your garage door does not have a beam, there should still be an auto-reverse function in the opener. You can test this function by closing the door onto a full roll of paper towels. When the garage door gets to within about an inch of the floor, the door should stop and go back up. If your door does not reverse, you can adjust it yourself using your owners' manual, or better yet, call a garage door company and let them do it.
- The springs in some garage doors can be under hundreds of pounds of pressure. If these springs break, they can become dangerous projectiles. If you haven't already done so, have a garage door company install cables that pass through the middle of the springs. This way, if a spring breaks, it is held in place by the cable. This does not apply if your garage door springs are located just above the garage door.
- Garage doors should be properly balanced. You can test the balance of your doors by releasing the door from the opener. This is done by pulling on the chain-locking cord that hangs down just inside the garage door. Do this

with the door in the closed position. When the door is released from the opener, open the door halfway. The door should stay in the half-open position. If it closes or opens by itself, you should have the springs adjusted by a qualified garage door contractor.

- Finally, the button to operate the garage door should be firmly placed at least 2 m. off the ground, out of the reach of children. Last house I looked at had both door openers hanging loosely on the wall, held only with the wires.

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Hahahahahahaha... I just received a newsletter from a local inspector who pays commission to a US franchise. He was wishing everyone in the area happy Thanksgiving. When I see this type of mass-produced and mis-directed media, I wonder if the rest of the newsletter relates to British Columbia or any local concerns.

**The Valley Voice** is written locally and deals with issues found in the central interior of BC.

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

## I LIKE MIKE HOLMES & LOVE HIS TOYS!

Ok, by now everyone has heard of Mike Holmes - but if you haven't you can catch him on HGTV, slamming contractors, inspectors and almost everyone else. Mike lets everyone know how things should be done - and the importance of "doing it right the first time". He recently announced that he has now decided to call himself a "home inspector" - even wrote a book about it. I'm not too sure if his Contractor's Liability Insurance covers his home inspections, but I guess since he charges between \$1000 to \$1500 per inspection - and brings in enough people to build the house, he feels confident enough to skip the need for insurance.

I like Mike because his goal is to protect his clients and he always puts them first - the way it should be. He exposes poor workmanship issues - especially from his fellow contractors. But now that he is calling himself a home inspector, he has opened the door to a whole new set of issues. **Hopefully, he will be exposing bad and inexperienced home inspectors in Ontario - the same way he did with bad contractors.**

When Mike is invited to renovate a home for his TV show, the owners always give him permission to hammer holes in walls and pull ceilings down. Unfortunately, as an inspector, he will be limited to visual observations only - most qualified inspectors are restricted to non-invasive and non-destructive inspections (after all, the owner really doesn't want holes punched in walls and ceilings).

In an effort to "see behind walls", **Mike uses an Infrared Camera (a thermal imaging camera)**. These

rather expensive cameras allow the lucky inspector who has one, to look through and see inside walls. Well, they really can't do that ... but they do allow inspectors to observe very small changes in temperatures, often caused by moisture or air movement, or heat transfers from pipes or wiring. For example, if a contractor has failed to install insulation in a wall or ceiling, we will "see" it. Overheated wiring and overworked circuit breakers show up - as does evidence of moisture behind walls and in floors. We can check in-floor and in-ceiling heating elements, look for air leaks in furnace plenums and water leaks in attics. We can also see if door and window weatherstripping is doing it's job and if attic covers are letting in cold air. I recently found a problem in a mobile home addition - it had no insulation under the master bedroom floor!

Using infrared does not guarantee that the inspector will find more issues than he would have normally found... but it does it help us do a better job in less time (without using a hammer and "taking it all down"). Once a suspicious temperature anomaly is found, the prudent inspector will use his other skills, his senses or special tools to determine the reason. As I said earlier, **I like Mike and agree with him when he says he would not do an inspection without his camera!**

I just thought of something - even with all his experience and all of his contacts, Mike Holmes would **NOT** qualify to be a licensed home inspector in BC - but that's another story. Who knew??



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## SEPTIC SYSTEM INSPECTIONS

Last week I was asked to check a property and my client asked if I would check the septic system as part of my inspection. The answer is a very emphatic **NO**. To my knowledge there are no home inspectors who can check a septic field or tank. Talk to a professional who can drain the tank, check the field and make sure everything is as it should be under the surface.

**For back issues of all my newsletters, see**  
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