

What happens when an inspection is finished and the purchaser walks away from the deal because of something the inspector said. Most experienced inspectors know what to say, and how to say it... but sometimes explanations don't always come out the way they were intended. It's always best to read the written report. (see page 2 for an example)

This newsletter discusses some of the concerns that are often noted on a typical inspection report and explains some of the wording used.

INSPECTING A VACANT HOME

Just about every home inspector has been asked to look at a property that has been vacant for a while. The problem is, we don't always know how long the property was been vacant. Unfortunately, when homes sit unattended, **BAD THINGS MIGHT HAPPEN**. For example: **rubber washers** on water valves can harden and start to leak once the valve has been activated or the water turned on. Water valves include sinks in washrooms, kitchens and laundries, washing machine hoses, wet bars, dishwashers, outside hose bibs, water heaters, water softeners, hot tubs, humidifiers and toilets. Leaks can start during the inspection or shortly after possession. Home inspectors can also have difficulty detecting **past leaks** especially under toilets and inside walls, particularly if the walls and floors have had time to dry.

Another serious moisture issue involves perimeter backfill and soil that has been deprived of water. Once lawn watering has commenced, **soil can expand** and cause upheaval situations that could affect the foundation.

Water heaters and furnaces may suffer "**thermal shock**" - a sudden change of temperature in the heat exchanger after being dormant for some time. Water in "**P**" **traps** tends to evaporate and cause odors, and **sediment** inside drain pipes can harden or solidify. Softening of debris might only show up when debris gets wet, causing a blockage.

Sediment can also be an issue in water heaters, humidifiers, water softeners and inside pipes. Unused pipes and vents with openings to the outside could be inhabited by wasps, rodents and other pests.

Electric **motors** in unused appliances such as garbage disposals, dishwashers, humidifiers, refrigerators, stoves, furnaces, garage door openers, etc., may appear to be working properly, but could develop "flat spots" on the electrical bearings which could lead to early failure.

A vacated home also lacks **humidity**, a condition consistent with people "living" in the home. Once the home becomes dry, cracks can occur in drywall, wood structural and framing members and flooring - results can include squeaks, open seams and cracks.

Finally, once a home ceases to have activity or noise inside or nearby, the **attic** becomes a place of choice for a variety of pests and insects.

Vacant homes that have been listed for an extended period, should be attended to on a regular basis to ensure that it has been subject to some type of normal activity.

GIVE ME A CALL

I was a speaker at a "**new home buyers session**" a few weeks ago. It was nice to see such a good turnout and after the session, every speaker was surrounded by buyers eager to find out more information. If your office is interested in presenting such a "course", please don't hesitate to call and ask for my attendance. Knowledgeable and informed buyers make the best buyers!

AIR CONDITIONING HINTS

Here are a few things you should know before summer.

1. AC units should **NOT** be operated or tested when the temperature is under 15 C (about 65 F) - unless it is part of a heat pump or similar unit.
2. AC units should be kept **LEVEL** and free of debris, shrubs, dirt and storage. Leave space above the unit, so air can circulate easily.
3. Power to the AC unit should be turned **ON** 24 hours **BEFORE** first use. Power is often shut **OFF** at the main panel or at a panel beside the unit each winter.
4. Ensure that there are no damaged fan blades or other damage on the outside compressor unit.
5. Check all pipes, tubes, wiring and insulation between the outside compressor unit and the interior furnace.
6. Ensure that there are no leaks where the insulated piping and other pipes or tubes join the furnace.

7. A by-product of air conditioning is water, which is normally drained out of the furnace. Look for a white irrigation pipe or drain line above the heating chamber, leading from the furnace to a drain or pump.
8. If there is no floor drain near the furnace, there will likely be a plastic or rubber hose leading to an in-the-home stack or a small pump near the furnace.
9. Ensure that all power connections and hoses for the pump are properly connected and in good condition.
10. Change the furnace filters on a regular basis
11. Turn the AC down (or off) when the house is vacant.
12. Use a digital-type, programmable thermostat for the most efficient operation
13. The difference in temperature between the inlet (warm) side of the furnace and the exhaust (cool) side of the furnace should be between 14 and 22 degrees F. You cannot make the house cool down **FASTER** by turning the controller to a lower setting.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HOME INSPECTOR

WHAT THE HECK DID HE SAY??

This one really freaks me out. Occasionally, I hear of a realtor who no longer recommends certain **home inspectors** because they may have said something that "killed a deal". My first reaction is "I hope I'm not one of them" My second thought is "**I wonder how I would have said it**"

Something closely related to this happened a few weeks ago - and I was glad that I was mentoring a CAHPI trainee. I was inspecting a home in Kelowna which was about 23 years old. Part of the original roof had already been replaced and the rest of the roof was getting old - it will definitely need replacing in a few years. There were a few areas that needed some immediate attention, especially around the chimney and eaves. Being particular in how I say things, I was quite specific when I said "**the roof is getting old but is not showing signs of any water leaks. A few areas should be addressed in order to make it last a few more years**".

What my client heard was "**the roof needed immediate work and was in terrible shape**".

And what my client told her agent was... "**THE ROOF IS FINISHED AND NEEDS REPLACING**".

HUH?

I also mentioned that there was carpeting on the deck and "**there was evidence of minor water damage at the edges of the deck not covered by the roof**".

What my client heard was "**this deck is badly damaged and should be fixed**".

What my client told her agent was "**THE DECK IS DANGEROUS AND SHOULD BE RE-BUILT**".

HOME INSPECTION NEWSLETTER

I started writing home inspection newsletters about six years ago and I make every effort to get a paper copy into as many hands as possible in the Okanagan, Nicola, Similkameen, Boundary and northern interior areas. Electronic copies are mailed all over BC, North America, Europe and Australia. If you or others would like to be placed on my e-mail list, please send me a note showing your e-mail address. This list will NEVER be made public.

For back issues of my newsletters, see

www.okvalleyinspector.ca

click on the "newsletters" tab.

HUH Again?

I hadn't even put the electrical panel cover back on yet when **her agent was at the door and appeared to be extremely annoyed with my wording.**

I repeated my exact wording for her agent and showed her the inspection report - fortunately, it was written in the report using the same wording.

This was a great example of misunderstanding or miscommunication. Often, hearing the wrong thing is brought on by buyers' indecision or confusion... sometimes buyers just don't understand what the home inspectors are saying... and sometimes buyers are simply looking for a way out of the deal.

Ron, my associate, was listening closely when I initially talked to my client because "**verbal explanations**" are one of the elements of his basic training. It was amazing at how much my comments changed from the time they were spoken - and what they sounded like when they reached her agent - and then back to us. Fortunately, the agent knew me from previous inspections knew how I verbally present my information to the buyer.

I often wonder though, how many of my clients have walked away from a deal because of comments made in the inspection report or "said" at the inspection. I'll probably never know! I also wonder how many times a large **X** is been put beside a particular inspector's name indicating that he was a "deal killer". It's never fair unless all the details are known!

By the way, the same client booked me the following week and closed on a place with a new roof and a concrete patio. It's nice when things turn out well.



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