

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

# Valley Voice

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

**L**isting realtors often discuss “curb appeal, de-cluttering & painting”. We suggest adding a “pre-listing home inspection” as part of the listing dialogue. We’ve all seen deals come to an abrupt halt after major defects (or a truckload of smaller concerns) are found later.

Collapsed sales add stress, delays or a reduced “selling price”. We simply cannot afford to lose sales due to poor maintenance or questionable design decisions. **OK Valley Home Inspections** continues with our list of concerns so the deal will close quickly, **the first time!**

## **SIDEWALKS SLOPING TOWARDS THE HOME OR FOUNDATION WALL**

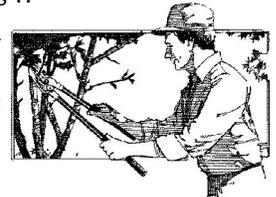
One of the more serious concerns potential homeowners have with a new home is the possibility of water entry into the basement. As inspectors walk around the exterior a home, we are observing the slope of the soil and sidewalks; as well as looking for damaged downspouts or signs of water erosion. If a negative-sloping sidewalk is exposed to a potentially large volume of water, we often suggest slab jacking to re-level the slab, joint sealing, drainage pipes, re-grading the slab or soil, adding swales to correct the grading, or even repairing the downspouts and gutters. Since much of the potential water entering a basement originates on the roof, it is a good idea to ensure all the drainage systems are clean and operating as intended.



## **BUSHES, TREES, SHRUBS - A FREEWAY TO YOUR HOME.**

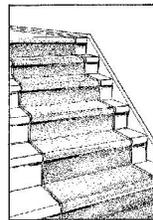
Bugs love bushes. They also love bushes with shade, humidity and a convenient walkway to wooden walls and other siding materials. Inspectors often find vegetation that covers an outside wall of the house, starting at grade

level all the way up to the roof ridge. Although vegetation looks good and has a cooling effect for the home, you could be creating a major pest, insect or moisture damage problem. Plants that hold moisture against outside walls, and create a cool place for bugs and insects to live, is not necessarily good for the home. Best to trim bushes and trees back at least 15 cm (6 inches) from the siding and remove any vines climbing up outside walls.



## **IMPROPER RISE AND RUN - TRIP HAZARDS - LOOSE CARPET**

Steps inside and outside a home should be an accepted standard height and width. 8 inches high - 9 inches wide, 7 inches high - 10 inches wide, etc. - multiples adding up to 17 inches. Usually, it's a well-meaning homeowner who builds his own steps who often makes errors at either the top or bottom step. Either of these locations could be potentially jarring and many twisted ankles have been attributed to improperly designed stairways. Similarly, we've all seen carpet on steps... this often holds damaging moisture against the wood steps, but sometimes it gets loose, torn or worn and could pose a trip hazard. Best to remove all carpeting material from decks and steps and confirm that the rise & run is proper.



## **ENSURE LAUNDRY VENT IS ATTACHED PROPERLY AND THE FILTER IS CLEAN**

As inspectors, we try to confirm that dryer venting originating inside the home is directed to the outside. What do we find most often? ... dryer venting that exits into a garage, vents that exit into a dropped ceiling (T-bar roofing), vents that exit into attics and vents that exit somewhere in the basement.

Sometimes venting problems can simply be an open or loose pipe connection that lets a great deal of moisture into the wrong spot. Check your dryer vent exits and tape any openings or loose connections. **HINT:** Keep the length of metal or plastic flex pipe to a minimum and clean the dryer lint screen before every load. If yours is a mobile home, ensure venting goes outside; and not under the unit.



## ATTICS THAT OPEN FROM THE OUTSIDE SHOULD BE LOCKED

Although it doesn't happen often, criminals wanting to break into a home would prefer to make their entry invisible and quiet. Where better than an unlocked attic hatch on the outside of a home? These attic hatches are usually at gable ends of the house and in darkened carports. Once inside the attic, robbers can pop a hole through the ceiling and drop into any room without being noticed. Add a padlock or combination lock to any outside attic opening (or screw the cover in place).



## WHAT ABOUT WATER PRESSURE (<80 PSI) AND WATER TEMPERATURE (<130° F)

Although it is not checked by every home inspector, many of us check in-house water pressure and temperature. Recommended **water pressure** is between 40 psi and

80 psi. Pressure higher than 80 psi can damage solenoid valves in dishwashers and washing machines as well as plastic pipes and valves in toilets. If we find extremely high water pressure, we usually direct closer attention to toilet valves and check for water leaks under dishwashers. Water pressure is easily adjusted by turning a screw on the pressure reducing valve.

**Water temperature** is checked (1) as a safety concern, and (2) to give a comparative temperature between the actual water temperature and the setting on the water heater. If a water heater is set to "VERY HOT" but the water temperature is less than 130° F, then we would probably suggest that the tank is in need of cleaning or possibly getting old enough to replace. NOTE: Water heaters are guaranteed for 6 to 12 years (more or less) but could have an life expectancy of 9 to 15 years. It's best to budget for replacement when the water heater passes it's "best before" date.

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

Not too long ago, I was asked to do a home inspection on a property that I inspected a few years earlier. I recognized the home and could remember the inspection quite well. Inspectors cannot use information paid for by a previous purchaser for the use of a subsequent purchaser without permission so we have to start all over again as a new inspection. But, that's pretty hard to do as many things I found in 2006 were also quite obvious during the 2008 inspection, and they were easily recalled. In 2008 I noticed that walls were re-painted, a fireplace was installed, new flooring and new appliances were added... mostly cosmetic things that helped the house look better and sell faster. Unfortunately, many of the original concerns were not corrected. What is worse, some of these should have been addressed immediately as they represented a safety hazard or structural concern.

In 2006, there were walls of storage shelves and debris essentially blocking access to most of the crawlspace (good thing I take lots of photos). All I could do on the report was to indicate that there were many areas that were not

accessible. There was high humidity in the area and there were several damaged beams and posts noted. There was also evidence that some beams had already been repaired prior to the 2006 inspection, but it was not obvious how many or what was done. The beams that were visible had wood rot or some sort of deterioration. There was no significant ventilation in the crawlspace.

At the 2008 inspection, the storage shelving and debris had been removed and the crawlspace took on a whole new dimension. Now we could clearly see the foundation walls and footings. Investigation revealed serious moisture damage to the wood supporting beams resting on the footings throughout the entire underside of the house. Some foundation footings were hanging in the air as someone had shovelled soil from under the concrete, weakening the whole structure to the point that floors above the beam were sloping.

It was a shame that the original owner did not make the crawlspace visible for the 2006 purchaser, as now that purchaser may be responsible for fixing the home at his expense. Furthermore, the home was not sold in a timely manner as it should have been. It was a nice property, had lots of upgraded options, but unfortunately, it still had a lot of **X's** on the inspection report.

This property was not bought by my client. While we are not sure of the exact dollars, structural repairs to this home might possibly exceed \$20,000, which might not cover the original concerns or moisture problems.

## OK VALLEY HOME INSPECTIONS

is offering **\$35.00 OFF** any pre-listing inspection.

Mention this newsletter. Expires Dec. 31, 2008



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