

# Valley Voice

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

A Newsletter for **REALTORS, MORTGAGE LENDERS, HOMEOWNERS** (and other inspectors)

**O**ne of my more popular newsletters was one where there was a question and answer section. The popular and detailed "summary page" in each of my reports is chock full of info, usually answering a range of questions related to the detailed report.

Here are some of the remarks from some typical inspection reports completed over the last few weeks. (I've made some minor text modifications for easier reading and comprehension).

## **HOW IS THE WIRING MY HOME?**

Overhead electrical service appears to be 100 amps. The panel, however; is illegally located in a kitchen cupboard and it was difficult to examine the interior without removal of the shelving and the cupboard doors. From a peek-a-boo opening, there did not appear to be any concerns in the panel except for a breaker that had two service wires attached. This could cause nuisance tripping, depending on what the service areas are and should be corrected.

The panel cover should be fully labeled.

There is some wiring and junction boxes in the stairwell leading to the crawlspace that are improperly installed. This should be corrected.

There were a few ungrounded outlets in the basement (usually an easy fix), and some surface mounted wiring in the garage (which should be protected with a suitable covering). Any outlet within 3 feet of a water source should be GFI protected.

## **THE GARAGE?**

There is a spring missing from the metal overhead garage door mechanism which could make it difficult and dangerous to open. If this continues to be a garage and is not converted into a workshop or additional living area, ensure that all openings between

the home and the garage are completely sealed to keep vehicle gasses from transferring back into the home.

## **DECKS**

Decks are designed for outdoor use and usually get wet. Normally, when wood gets wet, it dries quickly and little damage is done. However, when this deck and steps get wet, the **carpets, leaves** and **dirt** will hold the water against the wood for an extended period, and moisture damage will occur. I recommend removing all carpeting material and install a waterproof membrane. If carpet is desired, use a removable carpet.

The rear patio is wood and is built directly on grade. Expect it to deteriorate. Further, one of the posts supporting the upper deck appears to be resting on one of these deteriorating patio deck boards, and not on a permanent footing. Watch for movement and add a footing below the frost line.

The upper deck vinyl surface needs attention at seams and edges. Fill any holes and cuts in the surface with seam sealer (available at most floor covering stores). Fix or replace drip edge flashing around deck. Repair fascia and trim around the decks edges. Repair the handrail where missing. Strengthen supports for deck railing. Probable liability issue if unit is rented.

## **THE ROOF AND DRAINAGE**

The roof at this building is most likely original, making it about 14 years old. Most shingles in this area can be expected to last 20 to 30 years, depending on shingle quality, exposure and slope, plus a few other variables. There did not appear to be any serious concerns with this roof other than the area where water drains from the upper roof to the lower roof surface. Once the granules get worn off, the Okanagan sunshine can quickly deteriorate the exposed roofing felts. Due to their condition, I recommend that the deteriorated shingles be replaced with a similar product and the downspout be directed all the way to the lower gutter.

## **EXTERIOR SIDING**

Stucco siding shows some sign of damage at the front (southwest) corner which is limited to a small area. Major damage to framing or structure would normally manifest itself throughout the entire exterior

wall. There was no evidence of exterior or interior damage, evidence of repairs or settlement issues on the interior walls on either the main, second floor or the basement rooms. Although it cannot be determined conclusively, it is recommended that this area be monitored for further movement or additional cracking. I did not see any evidence that this cracking or settlement is currently active and in fact, may have been present for many years.

### EXTERIOR STAIRS

The steps at the rear of the home, and the landing at the bottom of the steps, are sloped away from the home. Both of these will be a concern in winter or when the steps are slippery. The slope should be corrected.

The exterior wall on the shed at the back of the home is exposed, unprotected plywood and is starting to show signs of deterioration. I recommend that this surface be finished with a proper exterior surface.

### HEATING ISSUES

This home has electric baseboard heating in all rooms. All controllers and wall units were activated and appeared to be operating as intended. The gas fireplace was also activated and appeared to be operating as intended. The filter at the back of this unit should be cleaned.

### CO DETECTOR

Anytime a home has a gas appliance; such as a fireplace, furnace, water heater, gas dryer, etc., or when the home has an attached garage, there should be a CO detector on each level of the home. Unlike smoke detectors, they do not have to be placed high on a wall and can be plugged into a conventional wall socket. Check for installation instructions.

### ELECTRICAL ISSUES AGAIN

Electrical concerns (at this home) include: single-strand aluminium wiring (this will probably have to be checked by a qualified professional), a distribution wire passing through the service entrance (not allowed), oversized breakers on at least two circuits (potential fire hazard), a loose wire on one breaker (outdoor pond I think), evidence of rust inside the panel (ensure the openings for service entrance wiring is watertight).

I also found two circuits with reversed polarity, one outlet could not be checked (too tight to push in my tester), several permanent extension cords (one to the garage, one to the pond lighting, and one to the outside power outlets) - all attached to a single outdoor wall outlet and octopus plug. There was also a loose power outlet box on the exterior wall just inside the front gate, improper wiring for the lights in the garage and improper wiring at the jetted tub.

Due to the fire hazard and safety issues, a qualified professional should be called immediately.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HOME INSPECTOR

I had an inspection the other day which had a 1992 air conditioner. According to the owner, it worked perfectly last fall. The unit didn't want to work when I looked at it. I mentioned to my clients' agent that the unit was almost 20 years old - likely close to the end of its life expectancy. I suspect it was an electrical concern - but that is well outside my area of expertise. I recommend that any unit of this age be checked by a qualified professional. Besides electrical concerns, this unit had some minor damage on the outside cooling fins. A professional will not only check the wiring, but also the circuit boards, controller, fluid levels, clean both the evaporator and condenser coils, and look over the compressor and related tubing.

The same house also had a gas fireplace. The front glass was almost white with residue but more importantly, the gas was shut off. I looked under the unit and it was filled with spider webs, dust and various other pieces of debris and fluff. No way was I going to light this unit. I found out later that it has not been used for about 9 years. If I had tried to light this unit, there may have been some severe consequences if there were a gas leak. Again, please call a professional to check it over!



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