

OK Valley Home Inspections

Where It's All About Knowledge and Experience

Valley Voice

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

Every year at this time, home inspectors celebrate(?) the anniversary of provincial licensing in BC. Of course, the idea of licensing was to increase the awareness and professionalism of our members - and to protect home purchasers from untrained and incompetent inspectors. Did it work? When you pick an inspector, look at all the options and ask for credentials.

KITCHEN APPLIANCE INSPECTIONS

Home inspectors are **NOT REQUIRED** to inspect, operate or determine the condition, age or life expectancy of major appliances. Many however; do it as a courtesy and to determine the plumbing, drainage, venting or electrical services. I recommend that they are checked for fundamental operation, not performance. Many inspectors don't bother looking at the appliances. The client should inquire with the seller regarding performance of all appliances.

Refrigerators: There is not too much to check short of ensuring that the items inside are cold or frozen. For the larger top-motor mounted units, I'll open the doors and GENTLY pull on them. If the refer moves, the anti-tip device was not installed or is loose. Check the pan underneath for mould.

Dishwashers: Always look inside the unit before running a dishwasher - I have found them used for storage, including cookbooks and other personal items. Check for metal fatigue near the pump and at the bottom of the door. I operate the dishwasher with a short cycle and then drain the unit to check for leaks. The door is opened fully and pushed down to ensure the unit will not tip should someone place a heavy item on the door.

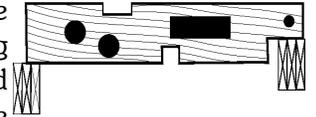


Ranges and Ovens: Always look inside prior to operating. Look for cracked glass and deteriorated gaskets and any obvious damage. The upper and lower burners or elements are activated to check for adequate power.



NOTCHES, CUT-OUTS AND HOLES... IN BEAMS, JOISTS AND COLUMNS

In many houses, it will be necessary to notch and drill holes in some of the joists and beams in the basement during construction or basic home improvement. Inspecting framing requires using judgment and common sense. Just because the



hole or notch is found does not mean the beam or joist will not perform as expected. Inspectors look for redundant defects or severe cuts or damage that can weaken the members. At one time, damage was originally blamed on plumbers or HVAC technicians, but recently it's the handyman homeowner. The severity of notches varies on their location, depth and size. Some have little affect - other can cause failure of the member. Depending on the seriousness of the concern, the inspector may recommend that it be evaluated by qualified professional.

AIR CONDITIONER - CONDENSATE DRAINS FOR EXCESS MOISTURE

A built-in, whole-house air conditioner usually has two main components. This is referred to as a split system. One part is inside the furnace and one part is outside the house, usually on the ground. One of the by-products of an AC system is water. Most of the time AC condensate water flows by gravity to a floor drain thru a PVC pipe. The termination is usually visible, but that is not a requirement. Other common locations for the AC drain are; the water heater overflow pan, the washing machine drain stack, on-the-wall standpipes, the laundry sink and sometimes, it's simply just a plastic bucket on the floor. Most manufacturers of air conditioning units suggest a "P" trap somewhere on the drain line to prevent insects and smells from entering the air handler through the condensate line; however, it is not required by code.



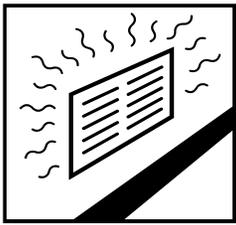
Electric pumps are used where a suitable drain is not available. These little (blue and white) pumps lift the water to an approved location once the tank is filled to a predetermined level. Evidence of these pumps usually signals the inspector that there is no floor drain near the furnace. I'll caution my clients of this should a water leak or overflow situation ever occur. Make sure the pumps' electrical connector cannot be accidentally unplugged.

SAFETY HAZARD

Some doors have **deadbolt** locks that need a **key** to be opened from the **INSIDE**. Finding the key when there is an emergency (such as a fire) could have serious results. Replace this type of lock with one with a knob! Similarly, many windows have metal security bars installed on the lower floors. There **MUST** be a key easily found nearby or a safety latch system installed to allow quick access should an emergency occur.

CRAWLSPACES

Many crawlspaces have fresh-air vent openings on the outside foundation walls that should be opened in summer and closed in winter. Sometimes these are blocked or damaged. Clean or replace these vents annually to ensure proper ventilation. Check the screens so insects, bugs and rodents can't enter. The best and newest vents slide open from the outside so owners do not have to navigate a crawlspace cavity.



That said however; it is still important for owners to enter their crawlspaces on a regular basis to look for **water entry, broken or leaky pipes, loose heater connections, high humidity, insect and animal activity, floor moisture, loose insulation, damaged wood members and other structural concerns.**

Most water shut-off valves and irrigation piping is usually found in the crawlspace and these should be examined on a regular basis to check for leaks.

HOME INSPECTION LICENSING

Prior to licensing of home inspectors a few years back, just about anyone with flashlight could hang up a shingle and call themselves a home inspector - no questions asked as long as you looked smart and could talk the talk. Many of these guys were uninsured or had no formal professional training. Standards with these guys were almost non-existent and there was no policing body to ensure that quality work was being performed. **Consumers in BC had little or no protection if something went wrong.**

In an effort to ensure that some sort of professionalism was available to consumers, **CAHPI** and **ASTTBC** encouraged the provincial government (Consumer Protection) to license inspectors, thus ensuring that the quality of inspections would meet a minimum standard. The government required all inspectors to be members of a professional association, and to carry a minimum amount of insurance. Three Canadian inspection associations were originally accepted, CAHPI, ASTT and CAHPI National.

At the time, they also made it **illegal** for anyone inspecting homes, condos, townhouses, modular buildings and manufactured homes to call themselves an inspector, without having a provincial license in their pocket.

After licensing was introduced, many of these bandits sought training thru one of the approved associations and many just quit the business altogether because they knew they were unable to meet the minimum requirements.

RECENTLY HOWEVER, the government (in its wisdom or perhaps due to outside pressure) decided to allow other groups to qualify as "trained professionals". **This opened the doors for American organizations, using a Canadian pseudonyms such as CanNACHI or InterNACHI to qualify as professionals by simply writing an un-proctored, over-the-internet, open-book exam.** Many boast that it only takes about an hour to complete and become an inspector. Just for fun, I wrote the exam (offered for **FREE** - you pay later to get your certificate) and finished in about 45 minutes with a passing grade of 82%. Cost to become eligible for licensing by the BC Government - about \$300 - no formal training required. (ironically, Consumer Protection actually charges more for provincial licensing than it costs to write the exam and become qualified over the internet).

Both CAHPI and ASTT require candidates to write a series of proctored, closed-book, timed exams. After passing successfully, all candidates participate in a series of on-site, in-the-field evaluations with a qualified inspector. Ultimately, they have to complete a further 250 paid-for inspections to qualify as a Registered or Certified Home Inspector. We are also required to up-grade our skills on a regular basis (by actually taking courses from qualified professionals). Membership, courses, exams and mentoring with Canadian associations is considerably higher than \$300.00, closer to 2500.00.

It has always bothered me when I see a glut of poorly trained inspectors hitting the streets. Many are great talkers or smoozers and get lots of jobs, many charge a ridiculously low fee (you often get what you pay for) and many charge plenty and perform an inferior inspection. I wonder if the quality of home inspections has really increased since licensing? It will be interesting to see how many guys are still in business this time next year.



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