

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

Valley Voice

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

Home Inspectors really don't like finding an excessive number of problems, but - that's what our clients pay us for (we're liable if we miss things). When found, inspectors either highlight problems in red lettering, mark them with an "X" or use some other obvious notation. Unfortunately, too many of these small little marks can jeopardize the sale of a perfectly sound home, especially in a marketplace as it is right now.

We simply cannot afford to lose a deal due to lack of maintenance or poor structural choices. The **Valley Voice** will continue with its list of inspection recommendations so the deal will close the first time! Meanwhile, it may be time to consider a **Pre-Listing Inspection!**

WOOD DECK OR ROOF SUPPORTS THAT ARE IN CONTACT WITH SOIL

Wood deck or deck covering supports should rest on concrete pads or footings. Sometimes the top of the footings are covered with soil, which means soil is touching the posts. We often find deck supports that are simply planted into the soil (like a fence post) with no protection from moisture. No matter how well one might think that the wood is treated, **WOOD WILL ROT** and deteriorate in time, as long as there is contact with moisture. Always make sure that support posts are resting on a footing of some sort, and not in contact with soil, wood chips or gravel (the voids will get filled with dirt eventually).

STAIR STRINGERS THAT ARE IN CONTACT WITH SOIL AND WILL DETERIORATE.

On a similar note, always watch for exterior wooden stair stringers that rest on grass or a gravel or soil pad. The bottom of the stringer will deteriorate. If the stairs can be lifted from the bottom, place a few bricks or concrete blocks under each stringer. A piece of roofing shingle or other waterproof material between the wood and the concrete will keep the two apart. Add a little slope to the brick or concrete to help with drainage.

SEAL THE KITCHEN OR BATHROOM SINK-TO-COUNTER JUNCTION

There is usually a visible rubber seal between the kitchen or bathroom sink and the countertop. This seal may have been overlooked or damaged. Sealing this junction will help keep out moisture and makes cleaning the countertop easier and healthier... this is one of the most unsanitary places in a kitchen. Water under this lip can damage the counter and cause it to lift, warp or deteriorate.

GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS THAT ARE MISSING, DAMAGED OR EXIT TOO CLOSE TO THE HOME

Although there are no codes for the installation of gutters and downspouts, they have a very important function. Over 90% of unwanted water that enters a basement, can often be traced to the roof. Gutters and downspouts direct water from a roof to a controlled drainage area to prevent water from entering the home or causing other problems. If gutters are filled with debris, develop serious leaks or have missing parts, then they cannot do their job properly. Depending on the situation, gutters should be checked and cleaned as often as needed. While that is being done, check for leaky seams and missing or disconnected downspouts. Water from a downspout should be directed 1½ to 2 meters (4 to 6 feet) away from a foundation wall or into an underground drainage system.

ELIMINATE THOSE PERMANENTLY INSTALLED EXTENSION CORDS

Nothing says "power concerns" than a large number of extension cords hanging from rafters or stretching between rooms. These temporary cords are often removed when the owner moves, but a buyer might see them as indicating inadequate power service... and they may have reason to be concerned! We've seen permanent cords attached to air conditioners, ceiling fans, outdoor sheds, water softeners, garage door openers, sprinkler controllers and sump or sewage ejector pumps. **Almost all** of these applications should have a permanent electrical source and not a temporary service. This inadequate wiring should be removed and replaced with properly installed connections and receptacles.

ENSURE ALL PIPES ARE SUPPORTED WITH PROPER PIPE HANGERS.

Homeowners always seem to want water in a different place than where it is now. Sometimes pipes have to be moved to fit around a wall, sometimes they just happen to sag, bang, creak or make other irritating noises. That's when homeowners decides to fix the problem with a "pipe hanger". I've seen everything from bent-over nails to pantyhose but nothing works as well as a 20¢ hanger that was designed for the job. The wrong hanger can cause problems including: excessive noise, electrochemical corrosion, or damage to the pipe (such as cuts or excessive compression). Pipe hangers come in various sizes and are made out of plastic, steel or copper. So does pipe! A perfect match! Never use a steel pipe



hanger (or nail) with copper pipe. Never use a copper or steel pipe hanger with plastic pipe. SIMPLE!

WATCH FOR PROPER CLEARANCE BETWEEN THE CHIMNEY AND WALLS

In homes where someone has modified the basement, we look carefully at the area around the gas furnace and water heater. These utilities are generally properly installed BEFORE there are any rooms or walls in the area but after a little construction, there may be concern.

There are different types of gas exhaust pipes and the cheapest and most common is a single-wall steel pipe. This pipe can get very hot and there is a concern that combustible material that gets too close, might ignite. The gas and fire guys like to have at least 15 cm (6 inches) between these pipes and any combustible material. The easy fix is to have some metal placed between the exhaust pipe and the wood members or gyprock.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF "A HOME INSPECTOR"

Is it a Grow-op House or not? About once a month, I perform an inspection of a home which may or may not have been pre-identified as a grow-op. Sometimes it is written on the disclosure statement, sometimes it came from "reliable" neighbours and sometimes is it just plain obvious. BUT often, we just don't know for sure. (I wish the RCMP had a list!)

Example. I went to a home which was not declared to be a grow home. Inside, it showed none of the obvious signs such as electrical modification, or holes through walls or ceilings, or staple marks around the windows. No obvious signs of excessive mould either. What the buyer did notice, was a number of black one-gallon plant pots under the basement stairs. There were water stains on the floor and a bundle of support sticks nearby with twist ties. There was NOTHING else that said "Grow-op". My internal alarm went off and I ran around the home again to confirm there was nothing I missed. If I had been asked,

I would probably had said "No" to a grow-op

Talking to the neighbour after the inspection, we found out that the previous owner was just an avid gardener.

Another time I went to a home that was listed as a former grow-op. The agent indicated that the home was professionally remediated but could not confirm much about the remediation company or what they did. The clients were concerned about the health and safety effects of such a building. I explained that we were not in the "Air Quality Business" and that a IQA person would be the best to check this out for them. That takes a few days to over a week for results. I searched the home for any other of the typical findings and again, I found nothing. If it was professionally cleaned, there should have been a report to indicate so. This house may always have the status of a "confirmed grow-op".

There was another rented home a few years ago that had lots of evidence of a grow-op, even though it had been "cleaned" by the vendor. What was left were a few windows that had staple marks around the perimeter, a circular opening between two rooms in the basement, and a service entrance conduit in the attic that had been covered with PVC piping and painted gray to look original. Not sure if the owner did this himself or if the grow operator did it when he left (not likely!) This was a log home with a slab floor but there was no carpet in the livingroom. The owner said that there had been a water leak from an upstairs bath and it had to be replaced. Turns out that the home was a major grow house and the livingroom was used as the main grow room. Fooling a **good home inspector** is hard to do. Fooling the untrained is easy.



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