

Valley Voice

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

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

Last week I had a call from a realtor who I have known for about 8 years. After setting up an inspection, the realtor sheepishly asked me what the name of my company was! The agent knew my personal name, but **not** my company name. It made me realize that no matter how hard one tries, if you fail to keep in contact with those who matter, it is possible to be forgotten.

OK Valley Home Inspections Ltd.

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE, NOR ANY DROP TO DRINK...

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Water leaks and moisture damage should be at the top of the list of concerns on any home inspection report. Wood and structural damage and mould are generally the result of a persistent water leaks. Here are some things that you can do to lessen your risk:

Water pressure: High pressure can lead to failure of pipes, pipe connections, plastic valves on toilets and dishwashers and various other fixtures. Almost every home built in an urban area has a "pressure regulator" which should be set between 40 and 80 psi.

Water temperature: Extremely hot water settings contributes to possible pipe failure. Keep water temperatures to between 120 to 130° F (48 - 55° C). High settings can lead to premature damage and failure of water heaters.

Pans and drains under water heater: The most common symptom of water heater failure is leakage. Add a drain pan with a drain pipe to the an in-house drain system (or to the exterior), under the water heater.

Refrigerator water feed valve: This is often a small valve which "punctures" a copper water service line and is attached with a cheap plastic water line. The valve installed by the builder is typically the cheapest valve on the market and prone to leakage. Budget to replace this valve with a more robust valve.

On a somewhat related topic, I recently examined a refrigerator which had a built-in ice-maker. This fridge was left connected to the water supply when the client went away for holidays. The solenoid controlling the fill tube inside the unit failed and water covered and destroyed the entire hardwood floor. Be sure to turn off the water service when leaving home for any extended period of time.

Washing machine hoses: Consider replacing the inexpensive black rubber hoses with hoses that are encased in metal braiding. I wish I knew someone who made pans for under the washing machine... could be a great innovation.

Check your main water shut-off valve: It is also important to know where your home's main water shut off is and to ensure that it works. If it is frozen, either replace with a new ball valve or keep a T-wrench handy so that you can quickly shut off water at the meter.

AC condensate drain systems: Regularly inspect your AC system's condensate drain system. It is not unusual to have the pipes clog or break and end up with water in the home. If your air handler is in the attic, check the safety pan to ensure that it is dry. Alarms and system shut-offs can be added.

Shut off valves and connections under sinks and toilets: Although this project is more expensive, older gate valves are often frozen and will break when operated. Replace with quarter turn angle stops (ball valves).

Inspect for under-sink drain leaks: Fill your sinks and inspect for leakage inside cupboards and cabinets when draining. This includes tubs - I have found leaks at bathtub and jet-tub drains.

High-efficiency furnace condensate line: High efficiency furnaces discharge water, just like your air conditioner. Ensure that the drain is open and, if it requires a pump, check to see if it works and drains properly.

Toilet wax seals: If your toilet wiggles back and forth, or from side to side, consider replacing the wax seal. This can be a disgusting job if not caught quickly. After adding a new seal, securely tighten the toilet to the floor.

Seal openings around sinks and tubs: Water getting into the wood countertop at the edge of a sink, or along the back-splash of a sink or tub, can lead to wet, decaying and mouldy wood (in a place you would hope would be the cleanest part of your home).

Missing or damaged shingles: Most homes have asphalt shingles which have a life span of 15 to 40 years. Most last about 20 to 25 years. Once the visible gap between the tabs gets to about an inch wide (the gaps started about 3/16 to 1/4 inch wide), then it is time to think about replacing. Anytime you see areas of shingles without granules (just black tar or paper), you'll know that life expectancy is limited.

Flashing - roof, chimney, vent, skylight, parapet walls, and antennae: These areas are one of the most likely places that a roof will leak. Sometimes not noticeable, it is worth watching for stains on the ceilings inside your home. The best approach, however; is to have flashing physically checked and inspected every year.

Structural junctions: These areas include garage-to-house and sunroom-to-house junctions. Keep these areas sealed and properly caulked.

Holes in siding; Most homes have several layers of water protection on the outside surface. The most obvious concerns include; missing siding, gaps, damaged siding or open seams. Fix or replace as needed to keep out water (and pests).

Missing, damaged or non-existent gutters and downspouts: Every roof should have a system installed to control water run-off. This way, water can be directed away from the home to a safe area. Roof water accounts for about 95% of water that eventually makes its way into a wet basement.

Downspout exits: Downspouts should exit about 5 or 6 feet perpendicular from the foundation wall. This is an easy fix!

Improper grading around the home: Soil that slopes towards the home, is like a freeway for water to enter cracks and openings in the foundation wall. Try adding a berm or a swale to the soil around your foundation wall to keep water away from the basement or crawlspace.

Clogged, broken, missing drainage tile: Not really made of "clay tile" anymore, this "plastic pipe" system captures water that seeps down the outside of the foundation wall and directs it away from the footings. Although it is not visible, it should be professionally checked if water is noticed seeping into the home from the joint between the wall and the basement floor.

INSPECTION CLASS

Realtors I am offering a one hour (non-credit) class on (1) home inspection terminology. Can you identify: eaves, soffits, sewer clean-outs, GFCI receptacles, major shutoffs, aluminium wiring, what is a sewage ejector pump? A macerating toilet? etc.

(2) I can also help you identify the visible mechanical systems and components that should be operating properly when the home is listed. Having things fixed **before** listing will help you close faster **after** a pre-purchase home inspection. **Ask your manager to call and increase your knowledge.**

Thanks to H&A Inspection Services, Scottsdale, AZ for much of the great information in this newsletter

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