

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

Valley Voice

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

Listing 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!**

HOSE BIBS CAN FREEZE, OR HAVE NO HANDLES & ARE LOOSE OR LEAKING

Outside hose bibs come in two styles... frost protected or not. Non-frost protected pipes must be shut off and drained before winter freeze-up. The popular option is a frost protected hose bib, designed so freezing water will not damage or burst pipes. **NOTE:** these will not drain or work properly in winter if a hose is left connected. While checking hose bibs, make sure they have a working handle and ensure they are not dripping water inside or outside. It is also important to check the caulking around the pipe where it exits the house... this is where mice, ants and stinkbugs can enter. While you have the caulk gun in your hand, use it on all other wall openings.

CARPETING ON DECKS AND STEPS

Decks are designed for outdoor use and usually get wet. Normally, when wood gets wet, it dries quickly and little damage is done. Fences are a good example of this. However, when decks and steps get wet, and **carpets, leaves** or **dirt** hold the water against the wood for an extended period, moisture damage will occur. It's best to remove all carpeting material and install a waterproof membrane. If carpet is desired, use a removable carpet.

INSTALL COVER PLATES ON ALL OUTLETS OR ANYWHERE WIRES ARE CONNECTED

In a properly installed electrical system, wiring and junctions are protected from mechanical damage, tampering, electrical shock and fire. Splices must be contained in electrical panels or junction boxes located in walls, ceilings or in attics. To protect the homeowner from shocks and contain possible fires, a cover plate or other protection must be properly installed. Covers should be screwed to securely attached boxes - this includes: wall switch plates, junction boxes, light fixtures, wall receptacle outlets, dryer outlets, etc. **NOTE:** outlet boxes must be readily accessible at all times and cannot be permanently covered by ceiling or wall coverings.

DAMAGED, REMOVED, RE-LOCATED OR CUT STRUCTURAL JOISTS AND BEAMS

Structural members in basements, walls and ceilings adhere to some very specific design and code requirements. Builders are required to build homes according to local codes and minimum standards that existed at the time. This is why a “permit” is required.

Inspectors find problems in areas where inexperienced homeowners, handymen or others installing HVAC or electrical upgrades have modified the original structure. Inspectors find ceiling joists cut in half or damaged and wall support members removed or severely weakened. Other notable concerns found include: oversized utility notches in ceiling joists, supporting wall studs removed so heating plenums could be installed, joists removed so toilet drains could be installed and wall supports modified for electrical outlets. If an inspector sees these concerns, he **will** mark them with an “**X**” in his report.

TIGHTEN TAPS AND FIX ALL LEAKS

How often do homeowners turn off a faucet and find that they have to “tighten it again” one more time. This is usually a sign of a damaged “O” ring which can easily be replaced by the homeowner. Leaky taps not only waste water but could increase energy bills. They also damage or stain tubs, toilets and sinks. Leaks in cupboards or behind toilets and washing machines are a concern as water can do major damage. If they leak for extended periods of time, damage can be extremely serious, requiring repairs to floors, walls and ceilings. Sometimes,

structural members can also be damaged, adding significantly to repair costs. Mould is a viable concern when water leaks into floor and wall cavities. Check all taps, valves, drains and connections prior to listing to ensure leaks are not evident.

MISSING OR DISTURBED GRAVEL ON TAR AND GRAVEL ROOFS

Although it is not as common as other roofing materials, "Tar and Gravel" roofing is still being used and being installed. This type of roofing consists of several layers of impregnated paper (covered with tar) which gives a roof its water resistance. The top layer is usually pea-sized gravel that is not only used as a ballast to hold the roof

down; but most importantly, it protects the tar and paper layers from damage from the **sun, hail, and debris**. These roofs are installed in flat or low slope applications and can last between 25 to 35 years. (depending on slope, exposure, maintenance, quality, etc.)

When inspectors check roofs with a gravel surface, we not only look at the condition of the gravel but other concerns such as blisters, buckling, alligating, open seams or damaged flashing. If the gravel has moved and tar is exposed, then there is potential damage by the sun and with it, an increased possibility of leaking. Repairs include redistribution of the gravel from an area with excess gravel to an area where gravel is missing. **If you can see anything black - cover it with gravel!**

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF "A HOME INSPECTOR"

I recently completed a home inspection in Summerland. This was an older home and was located in a great location. Unfortunately it suffered from poor maintenance as well as major abuse from the "handyman from hell". Sometimes it's just not possible to say anything good about a house and this was one of those cases. This sale did not go through. Without listing **ALL** the deficiencies, I'll define concerns that most likely would have been discovered with a **pre-listing inspection**. These would have been available to the listing agent and homeowner, before setting a selling price.

(1) **DIY** projects, with little or no cost: **STRUCTURE**: Remove wood and other debris from the crawlspace, repair the damaged screen at the front door, set a trap to eliminate rodents in the crawlspace, clean leaves from the gutters, re-grade soil to prevent it from touching a finished exterior surface **ELECTRICAL**: add electrical cover plates where needed, tighten light fixtures to the ceiling, put a battery in the smoke detector **HEATING**: clean or replace the dirty furnace filter, tape heating duct junctions where air is escaping, replace missing and damaged floor registers, add air control devices in basement ducts **PLUMBING**: add a handle to an outside hose bib, add caulking to the hose bib

where it exits the wall, ensure the sump pump is working, plugged in and drains properly, add proper pipe hangers where unsupported length exceeds four feet, exchange steel (and rusting) pipe hangers with copper pipe hangers for copper service pipe, tighten the toilet to the floor.

(2) **HANDYMAN** projects: **STRUCTURE**: Add a proper exterior finish (i.e., vinyl or metal) to an exterior plywood wall at the garage, add gutters and downspouts with extensions at the back of the garage, replace 20 feet of flexible coil-type dryer duct with a metal ducting **ELECTRICAL**: protect surface mounted wiring with "bx" cable or some other approved covering **HEATING**: Re-distribute insulation in the attic, add insulation to the hatch cover and weatherstripping around the hatch opening.

(3) **PROFESSIONAL** projects: **STRUCTURE**: re-shingle the house and garage, repair the chimney cap and re-point damaged mortar at the chimney **ELECTRICAL**: add extra breakers to the panel to eliminate double wires on some breakers, add additional outlets where needed, remove exposed wiring for unused baseboard heating in bedrooms, have an electrician examine wire sizing for a 20 amp breaker with a #14 ga wire. **PLUMBING**: consider replacing the fourteen-year-old water heater with a new unit and drain pan **HEATING**: have the furnace serviced and cleaned (replace fan belt and check heat exchanger)

Curb appeal, de-cluttering and cosmetic concerns can certainly kill a deal. By suggesting or requesting a pre-listing inspection and addressing many of the issues above, \$ thousands could have been added to the selling price and the deal might have closed much faster!

EVERYONE WINS!!



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