

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

# Valley Voice

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

**H**ome staging, curb appeal, painting and de-cluttering, all contribute to the successful sale of a home. But what happens to the “deal” when an buyer learns about undetected problems just before closing? You can improve the chances of keeping the deal alive by booking a “pre-listing inspection” performed by a provincially licensed Inspector.

We are pleased to publish the eighth in this series of newsletters, discussing concerns that **should** be addressed **before** the purchasers’ Inspection.

## **POOR DRIVEWAY DRAINAGE - A WATER PATHWAY INTO YOUR GARAGE**

Driveways are found on just about every property in BC. They are usually made of concrete or asphalt but many are still gravel. Whichever one you have, it is important to watch the drainage pattern. Water that flows toward the home or garage must be controlled by using proper slope, a drain, channels or levees. Any water that gets past the garage door into the garage, can jeopardize the integrity of the garages’ sill plates. There is also concern with excess moisture being trapped in the garage. When preparing for a sale of the home, ensure that the slope is directed away from the home or footing, confirm that drains are working (pour a few buckets of water down the drain occasionally), and make sure that channel grooves are open and will allow water to flow properly.

## **DECKS - WATCH OUT!**

Almost every new home has a properly engineered and built sundeck or porch. Unfortunately, many older homes have after-sale porches and decks, often built poorly (or illegally) by a previous homeowner. Diligent inspectors will look very closely at these 3rd party or home-made decks, checking footings, structure, handrails and guardrails and surface materials. There are standards that

relate to deck design with attention directed toward the deck’s size, it’s height, whether or not the deck is “attached” to the house, the materials used, the footings, the span between supports, surface drainage, etc.

Inspectors check to see if deck members are simply nailed\* or lag-bolted to the home. Decks that are permanently **attached** to the home, usually require columns to be supported on piles located below the frost line. Decks **not attached** to the home may have surface footings or pads. In either case, no portion of the wood supporting members or structure should touch soil.

The structure must be strong enough to support the design weight, meeting minimum safety design standards. Joists should have metal joist hangers at all wall connections. Deck surfaces can be wood (with drainage gaps) or have a waterproof membrane - often a vinyl surface glued to a subfloor. FYI, vinyl decking surfaces usually start getting brittle at 10 years. **If there are any cuts or open seams in any vinyl surface, it is absolutely imperative to make repairs immediately** - water getting under this surface can be fatal to the deck sub-surface. We’ve also seen concrete, Hardie-plank\*, painted plywood\* or OSB\*, ceramic tile and indoor or outdoor carpeting\*. Carpeting without a proper waterproof membrane is never recommended.

Most inspectors will also check the junction between surface mounted guardrail supports and the deck surface. Water entering bolt holes can rot the structure - so put a dab of silicone on each of the bolt heads. Guardrails should be properly designed (42” high) and built to prevent adults and kids from falling through and secure enough so they will not collapse. Standards for handrails and guardrails vary with the height of the deck or porch above grade. It is very important to get a **STRUCTURAL PERMIT** when building a deck... the licensing body or municipality **will always ask** the licensee to confirm the design, spans, height, loads, materials, etc. Why not put safety first?

Finally, how are the wood deck members finished? This often depends on the “exposure” (wet? dry? sunny?) and the building material used. Some decks are left untreated\*, some are simply stained or painted, and some are pressure treated. In any case, monitor the deck surface, handrails, guardrails and sub-structure for deterioration - and protect the surface accordingly.

\* not recommended

## SLIDING DOORS - DIRTY OR DAMAGED TRACKS, LOCKS & SCREENS

Whenever possible, home inspectors will open and close a representative number of windows and doors. Inspectors look for ease of operation, damaged framing, broken glass, damaged tracks and screens, water entry and operation of sliders and locks. If we find leaks, damage or safety concerns, we will mark it in our report.

## CRAWLSPACES WITH DIRT FLOORS - A DIRTY LITTLE SECRET DOWN BELOW

Both contemporary and older homes can be built with crawlspaces. The floor could be dirt, sand, gravel or a rough skim coat of concrete - often only 1½ to 2 inches thick. Typically, there may be a 2½ to 3 foot high clearance, although the range is from 1 foot to 8 feet, meaning that a furnace or water heater can be located in the crawlspace. If there is a dirt floor, it is recommended that a **continuous poly vapour barrier, at least 6 mil thick**, be added.

Properly installed, this will help control excess moisture that enters or evaporates through the soil. Although it is not shown to be a major concern in BC's interior, this can also slow radon gas as well. It is very important to ensure that dirt, sand or gravel crawlspaces are free of wood and other wood products, such as cardboard - giving insects and mould a place to thrive.

## ELECTRICAL PANEL - WHAT A SHOCK

If a home has had modifications made to the electrical wiring or service panel, **a permit should have been issued**. Most inspectors can tell if the electrical has been modified; and we can often tell the qualifications of the person doing the work. When inspecting a service panel, we look at many things, including the breakers, wire guages, the point where wires enter the panel and the route wires travel inside the service panel. Serious safety concerns are always possible when amateurs do the work. Next issue... more details about electrical concerns.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF "A HOME INSPECTOR"

## LICENSING OF ALL INSPECTORS IS NOW MANDATORY IN BC

Starting April 1, 2009, **ANYONE performing residential home inspectors** in B.C. **MUST** meet the qualifications of the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors (CAHPI), the National Certification Program (NCP), or the BC Association of Applied Science Technologists... or qualify for a temporary exemption.

The standards and training skills of ALL American Home Inspection Associations (including those with Chapters claiming to be Canadian) were considered to be unacceptable. Inspectors in this group, and a number of untrained or unregistered inspectors, are now required to become members of a Canadian association. Canada's higher entrance requirements include extensive and juried examinations... plus peer evaluations. **Like agents and lawyers, holding a BC "License" makes sense!**

All licensed inspectors will now have to carry E&O and General Liability Insurance. We are also subject to a criminal record check and many will carry WCB.

Also beginning April 1, **penalties** will be assessed for anyone doing business as a residential inspector who does not carry a BC Inspectors' License. Use the CAHPI website to **confirm that ANY inspector or company you choose (or have previously recommended), is a STILL member in good standing!** Many have purposely let their status lapse. [www.cahpi.bc.ca](http://www.cahpi.bc.ca)

### This is the 8th newsletter in this series.

Having homes inspected before listing may uncover problems that may not have been noticed or disclosed by the current homeowner.

When a **pre-listing inspection** is requested, I will complete a detailed and thorough inspection. When finished, I'll sit down with client and explain the various findings. After concerns have been addressed, I will re-inspect the property (usually at no charge) and revise the original report to reflect the changes.

**For back issues of all my newsletters, see [www.okvalleyinspector.ca](http://www.okvalleyinspector.ca)** click on the "newsletters" tab.



**www.okvalleyinspector.ca**  
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