

Home Inspections Avert Future Headaches

Suppose you bought a house and later discovered, to your dismay, that the stucco exterior concealed a nasty case of dry rot. Or suppose that when you fired up the furnace in the winter, you discovered a cracked heat exchanger leaking gas into your home. The best way to avoid unpleasant surprises like these is to arrange for a home inspection before you buy.

Home Inspections Help You Avoid Unpleasant Surprises

A good home inspection is an objective, top-to-bottom examination of a home and everything that comes with it. The standard inspection report includes a review of the home's heating and air-conditioning systems; plumbing and wiring; roof, attic, walls, ceilings, floors, windows, doors, foundation and basement.

Getting a professional inspection is crucial for older homes because age often takes its toll on the roof and other hard-to-reach areas. Problems can also be the result of neglect or hazardous repair work, such as a past owner's failed attempt to install lights and an outlet in a linen closet.

A home inspection is also a wise investment when buying a new home. In fact, new homes frequently have defects, whether caused by an oversight during construction or simply human error.

Getting an Inspector

Real estate agents can usually recommend an experienced home inspector. Make sure to get an unbiased inspector. You can find one through word-of-mouth referrals, or look in the Yellow Pages or online under "Building Inspection" or "Home Inspection."

Home inspections cost about a few hundred dollars, depending on the size of the house and location. Inspection fees tend to be higher in urban areas than in rural areas. You may find the cost of inspection high, but it is money well spent. Think of it as an investment in your investment – your future home.

Some builders may try to dissuade you from getting a home inspection on a home they've built. They may not necessarily be trying to hide anything because most builders guarantee their work and will fix any problems in your new home before you move in. Some builders, in fact, will offer to do their own inspections. But it's best to have an objective professional appraisal - insist on a third-party inspector.

An Inspection Will Educate You about Your House

Education is another good reason for getting an inspection. Most buyers want to learn as much as they can about their purchase so they can protect their investment. An examination by an impartial home inspector helps in this learning process.

Ask if you can follow the home inspector on his or her rounds. Most inspectors are glad to share their knowledge, and you'll be able to ask plenty of questions.

Inspection Timing and Results

Homebuyers usually arrange for an inspection after signing a contract or purchase agreement with the seller. The results may be available immediately or within a few days. The home inspector will review his or her findings with you and alert you to any costly or potentially hazardous conditions. In some cases, you may be advised not to buy the home unless such problems are remedied.

You could include a clause in your purchase agreement that makes your purchase contingent upon satisfactory inspection results. If major problems are found, you can back out of the deal. If costly repairs are warranted, the seller may be willing to adjust the home's price or the contract's terms. But when only minor repairs are needed, the buyer and seller can usually work out an agreement that won't affect the sale price.