

Preparing a Home for an Inspection

There is no doubt that the inspection process adds another level of stress to the transaction, however, it doesn't necessarily need to be a "nail biter". Addressing a few typical home care and safety issues is not only an important part of normal maintenance, but can also do a lot to facilitate the inspection.

The Exterior

- Try to keep plants and bushes away from the siding. They not only create great habitat for wood destroying insects, but can contribute to wood rot decay. Trees touching the structure also provide a ready pathway into the home for insects like carpenter ants.
- Keep at least 4 to 6 inches of clearance from the bottom of the siding to the soil to prevent wood decay.
- Avoid storing things against the house, especially lumber or firewood, as it can create a conducive environment for infestations of wood destroying insects which may then infest the home.
- Always maintain good caulking around exposed doors, windows and over nail heads. Don't let your paint deteriorate, especially if you have a composite wood siding. These are critical maintenance items to prevent siding deterioration.

The Roof

- Keep debris and moss off your roof. A pressure washer can be quite damaging, so use one only if absolutely necessary and gently at that. A roofing supply company can recommend products which will clean the roof without damaging it. Zinc granules work wonders.
- Make sure the gutters are clean and in good repair. Fix any gutter or downspout leaks you find. Downspouts should always be diverted away from the house with splash blocks or drain lines.

The Garage

- Check the automatic reverse function on the garage door opener to be sure it is properly adjusted. If you are uncertain about this check the Consumer Product Safety Commission website for more information about garage door safety.

- If you have a furnace and electric panel in your garage, make sure there is full access to both. The inspector will need adequate space to safely remove the cover from the electric panel, not just look at it from a distance. The same holds true for the furnace.

The Interior and Attic

- Check the plumbing supply and drain lines beneath sinks for leaks.
- Check the floor around the toilet for signs of leaking such as discolored, swollen, or soft vinyl. If you see this, the toilet wax ring may need replaced and the flooring itself could be damaged.
- Repair any damaged caulking or grout on tub and shower surrounds. Restore any failed caulking on the floor in front of tubs and showers. Failed caulk and grout can lead to wood decay of walls and flooring by allowing water to penetrate.
- Look in the attic for any leaks, signs of mildew, or disconnected fan ducts. Consult with a mold remediation specialist if you see dark, mold-like staining in your attic.
- Be sure all windows are operational, especially in bedrooms.
- Take care that smoke detectors are present and functional.

Plumbing

- Make sure the water heater has adequate earthquake strapping. Your local hardware store will carry the proper straps. Also check for signs of leaking.
- Check for any plumbing leaks in the sub-structure crawl space.

Heating

- Change furnace air filters regularly. This is probably the most important and neglected part of furnace maintenance.
- Have your heating/cooling system serviced on a regular basis. Keep your service records for prospective homebuyers.

Sub-Structure Crawl Space

- Make sure the crawl space is fully accessible. If there is water in the crawl space, or any hazardous materials, the inspector will not be able to check out this area until these conditions have been corrected.

- Be sure the crawl space is free of any wood or cardboard debris and/or fallen insulation as they are conducive to infestations of wood destroying insects.
- Repair any damaged foundation vent screens with ¼ inch non-louvered wire cloth and be sure the vents are never blocked as this can create high humidity levels in the crawl space.
- Check to see that all bare ground is fully covered with plastic. If more is needed, use only 6 mil black plastic. This is also important to keep humidity down in the crawl space.
- Repair any disconnected heat ducts or clothes dryer ducts.

On The Day of the Inspection

- It's best to plan on being out of the home during the inspection as the buyer and inspector will feel more at ease to discuss any issues. Typically, allow at least 3 hours for the inspection.
- Make sure all animals are secured.
- Be sure there are no locked gates restricting access to the yard.
- Make sure all the utilities are on and all appliance gas pilot lights are lit. The inspector will not turn on appliances or light pilot lights.
- Check again to be certain there is complete and unrestricted access to the electric panel, the furnace or boiler, the water heater, the attic and the access to the sub-structure crawl space. If there are electric panels, access doors or hatches which are not readily visible, leave a note describing where they are. Remove any personal items which would block access, such as pictures over electric panels or stored items in a closet that has a hatch in the floor. The inspection will not be completed if the inspector cannot safely and readily remove service covers or access all the areas of the home.