

## Home Inspections – Is Your Inspector a Structural Pest Inspector?

Before the recent law requiring the licensure of home inspectors with the Department of Licensing, home inspectors were required to be Structural Pest Inspectors, SPI's, licensed through the Washington State Department of Agriculture. In addition, a complete wood destroying organism, WDO, inspection was performed as part of the home inspection. The scope of this inspection included three things: First was the identification of wood destroying organisms including carpenter ants, termites, wood boring beetles, wood rot decay and moisture ants. Second was damage from these organisms and third were conducive conditions – things which could promote infestation, or damage. And when findings were identified, a diagram was also required to note their location.

At the time, many home inspectors strongly opposed the requirement to be licensed as an SPI, feeling it exceeded their role as a generalist. So when the new home inspector law dropped the SPI requirement, it came as no surprise that those same inspectors were also quick to drop their SPI license. But what does this mean for consumers?

To begin, the home inspector law does not require a complete WDO inspection to be performed. However, inspectors must identify and document conducive conditions. That would include things like plumbing leaks, downspouts that don't drain away, plants growing against the house, scrap wood in the crawl space and so on. They must also identify any wood rot. But if they have given up their SPI license, they must defer any suspected insect damage to a qualified professional, an SPI, or a PMP, Pest Management Professional, for evaluation and identification. In other words, if there is insect damage discovered, they cannot tell you if that damage is from a beetle, a termite, or an ant. In the same vein, inspectors lacking their SPI license may no longer legally make insect identification. That means they cannot tell you if the ants on the sidewalk are carpenter ants, or some other harmless species. They cannot tell you that the sawdust in the corner is actually frass from carpenter ants. Again, they must recommend that either an SPI, or PMP, identify the insect, or the evidence.

Home buyers should always take the time to properly interview inspectors instead of just choosing the inspector with the lowest fee. Clearly, one of the important questions to ask is whether or not the inspector is also licensed as an SPI. And if so, will there be an additional fee for performing a complete WDO inspection? If the inspector is not an SPI, remember that any additional professional inspections to identify insects, or damage, will come at further cost, possibly to you – making that low inspection fee perhaps not so low after all.

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