

Home Inspections -The Last Man In

Ask any home inspector about the true nature of their job and they will describe themselves as a generalist responsible for identifying readily visible conditions which may require further investigation, or remediation by a specialist. If a home inspector discovers a condition with a system, or component, they should have sufficient knowledge and understanding to make a cogent recommendation for further evaluation by the appropriate tradesperson, or professional. However, that does not necessarily mean the inspector is responsible for identifying the exact cause, or extent of a condition they identify. Often, such determinations cannot be made without performing destructive discovery, exhaustive examinations and technically detailed evaluations. Clearly these actions are not part of the generalist's scope of practice.

The, "last man in", is commonly used to describe the specialist who follows the home inspector. They have the training and experience to understand things at a more sophisticated level than the inspector. It is within their purview to do the detailed, technically exhaustive, or destructive discovery that the home inspector does not do. They are the ones who can dismantle the furnace, pull the breakers out of the electric panel, pry apart roof flashing to discover the source of a leak, or cut into a wall with a saw to find rot. The *last man in* will find hidden conditions and they will find more things than the home inspector did. That is to be expected when a specialist follows a generalist and it is not necessarily a poor reflection upon the home inspector. It is this *last man in* who, unlike the inspector, is ultimately responsible for determining cause and effect and making definitive recommendations for correction. It is also the *last man in* who can then totally discredit an inspector when they say, "I can't believe your inspector didn't see this" or, "I can't believe your inspector didn't call this out".

The important and essential lesson here goes back to understanding exactly what the inspector can and cannot do. Some trade specialists have little understanding of what a home inspector actually does, even though they may be extraordinarily quick to pass judgment. This is just another reason why it is so important for the consumer to take the time and familiarize themselves with the inspector's scope of practice. Most importantly, if the findings or comments from *the last man in* raises questions about the inspection, talk to the inspector! Any professional and reputable inspector will step up to the plate if they did indeed make a mistake - but before you put the heat to the inspector, take the time to be sure it isn't the *last man in* who is really making the mistake.

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