

Expectations For Your Home Inspector.

One of the questions at the heart of inspecting asks whether or not it's reasonable for an inspector to identify **all** of the reportable conditions throughout the home? Understanding that an inspector can only identify what is visible on the day of the inspection and that he or she cannot move furnishings, tear open walls, or spend an inordinate length of time doing the inspection, the answer is, "no". Realistically, the possibility always exists some conditions will be missed, particularly where barriers such as foliage, stored items and furniture limit access. With older homes, some hidden conditions simply cannot be detected, no matter how experienced the inspector may be. In fact, there are inspection experts who claim that identifying, "only", 90% of existing conditions during an inspection is rare and 80% exemplary. Also, different home inspectors may see things the other won't, even if they were trained side by side. It should be no surprise that two equally qualified and diligent inspectors may each inspect the same home on two consecutive days and identify slightly different conditions. That's just part of being human, not necessarily a bad inspector versus a good one.

Another very important point to understand is that a home inspector is not required to diagnose why a particular condition is present. Standards of Practice clearly state the role of an inspector is to detect, evaluate and direct to a professional. Certainly the inspector may have some notion of the etiology of certain conditions, but it still remains the role of the professional to diagnose, not the inspector. Further, diagnosing often requires destructive discovery, which is outside the home inspector's scope of practice. Consider where an inspector detects signs of moisture or decay in the structure. Being prohibited from tearing things apart, the inspector cannot determine what the moisture source is or how widespread the decay may be. This is why it is so important to only have work performed by licensed, experienced and qualified professionals who understand their role in diagnosing the scope and cause of the condition and also mitigating the cause, rather than simply fixing the obvious.

Lastly, and most importantly, a home inspector is not a Real Estate Agent. Every time I have performed an inspection where the buyer is not represented by a realtor I am asked questions I cannot, or will not answer. I have fielded as many as 18 phone calls related to a single inspection and could offer neither advice nor guidance as all of the buyer's questions were related to issues which were outside my scope of practice. Simply put, an inspector cannot help you decide if the price is right, what issues to negotiate over, what form to use, who should fix what, whether the septic tank should be pumped, who checks the well water, where the greenbelt ends, and so on. These issues require the expert guidance and help of a realtor, not an inspector. There is no disputing the importance of having a home inspection performed when purchasing any home. The only thing more important is making certain your home buying transaction begins and ends with a professional Real Estate Agent by your side.

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