

Invest in a Home Inspection

Invest in a Home Inspection Buying a home can be one of the most important financial investments you will ever make. But, how do you know if the house is everything it appears to be? If the home you are about to purchase does not have the structural integrity to give you peace of mind, you may be buying into a money pit and sleepless nights. A home inspection is one of the smartest ways to educate yourself about the physical condition of a property you want to buy.

A home inspection is a visual inspection of the physical structure and mechanical condition of a home, from roof to foundation. The inspection is designed to identify problems that may exist, advise of repairs needed and, in some cases, provide preventive maintenance advice. A home inspection points out the positive aspects of a home, as well as the maintenance that will be necessary to keep it in good shape.

A home inspector may be a residential architect, structural engineer or building contractor. Currently, home inspectors are not regulated by any federal government agencies, and in most states, do not require licensing. However, structural engineers must be licensed.

It is up to the buyer to ask prospective inspectors questions about their experience and knowledge when deciding who to hire. When looking for a home inspector, the Better Business Bureau suggests the following general guidelines:

- Ask friends and acquaintances for recommendations. Check with the Better Business Bureau or your consumer protection division if you have questions.
- Look for someone who is familiar with the type of home to be inspected. Does the inspector specialize in residential or commercial property?
- Ask prospective inspectors questions about their professional training, relevant experience and/or length of time in business. Find out if the inspector belongs to a professional association, such as the American Society of Home Inspectors or the National Society of Professional Engineers. Membership in professional associations may offer added assurance of an inspector's qualifications and training.
- Look for home inspectors who are committed to avoiding conflicts of interest, who refuse to be involved in any real estate transaction or to deliberately obtain work in another field that could benefit them financially as a result of their inspection work, and who hold the safety, health and welfare of the public paramount in the performance of their professional inspection duties.
- Be present during the inspection. The majority of inspectors will allow you to tour the home with them and ask questions during or after the inspection. The inspection can last anywhere from two to five hours, depending on the size of the house.
- Ask how soon after the inspection will you receive a copy of the home inspection final, written report. Carefully read your home inspection report and make a list of items that need correction; this will help you to determine your future expenditures for repairs and maintenance. The report will contain useful information that serves as a reference for you in the future. A home can not fail an inspection; understand that the home inspection report records the condition of the home, both positives and negatives.

4/7/2004