

Heating & Electrical Systems

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Independent Home Inspector

Congratulations! You've been searching for a new home and you finally found one that suits your lifestyle needs. Among other things, your offer includes a conditional inspection of the property by a qualified professional. You anticipated a positive report, and although you thought you had a good idea of the problem areas in the home, your inspector hands you a 25-page report.

Don't panic. An in-depth investigation of a home by a qualified inspector covers a lot of ground. They look at the structure, exterior, roof, insulation, heating, cooling and electrical systems, along with a detailed interior assessment. The intent is to educate you on the key building systems, and to try and identify any areas of concern that may affect your health and safety, or lead to unexpected costs. The amount of information presented in a three-hour inspection can be overwhelming. Ultimately, the focus needs to be on the major components of a building -- the ones that typically suffer over the years and cost home buyers the most. These include the overall structure, roof, heating and electrical systems. When taken into consideration, these primary components will help to determine your comfort level in order to move forward with your purchase.

An inspection report will comment on the current condition of these items

and point out deficiencies that need to be addressed. The inspector should explain the function of the item, the impact that a problem may have on you, and provide

recommendations on fixing the problem along with timelines. For example, a furnace that is original to a 20-year-old home

may show signs of being unsafe, may not have been well maintained, or doesn't perform its function of providing adequate heat to the building. However, it's important to note that even if all is well with the furnace on the day of inspection, it could fail in the near future due to its age. Depending on the make and style, typical furnace life is 15 to 20 years. In this case you should find out the service history of the furnace, and budget for replacement within the next 5 years.

An inspection of a home's electrical system should assess the current condition, and whether it poses a hazard to the building, or its occupants. The inspector will look at the electrical service entering the home to verify a safe installation, and that it is not exposed to damage. A close inspection of the distribution panel wiring, circuits and branch wiring will help determine if the equipment was installed professionally, or if upgrades need to be considered. An older home may still have a 60-amp service, and while it may be safe for use, the inspector should help determine if the service size fits the home's size, along with your current lifestyle and plans for the future. The standard service size in most homes is 100-amps, which allows you to operate numerous modern appliances, including computers, dishwashers, washers and dryers.

Major defects that are identified with regard to the building's structure should be taken seriously. Foundation wall cracks, that show signs of leaking on the inside of the building, need to be fixed to prevent further impact on other building systems. Cracked, or bulging, wall cladding can be a sign of additional problems that can't be seen, and may require further investigation by a professional engineer. If possible, your inspector will prioritize the problems, determine the root cause, and suggest ways to remedy the situation.

Buying a home is one of the largest purchases you'll make in your lifetime. Home inspection provides you with the knowledge you need in order to make an informed decision about your real estate purchase. When reviewing an inspection report, remember that most of the items will be weighted in terms of priority or concern. Special attention needs to be paid to items that have immediate impact on you, and your family. Make sure you understand the report and ask your inspector for clarification, when in doubt.

Send your comments and questions to: info@bookahomeinspection.com.

HOUSE TIPS

- **Yearly scheduled service and maintenance of any heating system not covered under warranty is recommended to ensure maximum efficiency and longer service life**
- **Under normal use, septic tanks should be inspected and pumped every 3 years. Remember to limit the input of detergents, conditioner salts and paint products as they reduce the efficiency of the septic system.**
- **Maintain the grade around the building to ensure water drains away from the foundation**
- **Ensure a minimum 6 to 8" of clearance exists between the ground and any wood structure, brick walls or siding materials**
- **Ensure dryer vent exit points are free from lint and debris and that the damper operates freely**



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