Home Tips



• CHRISTIAN BUILDING INSPECTORS, INC., 3697 HABERSHAM LANE, DULUTH, GEORGIA 30096, 770-849-0920 • JANUARY 2007 •



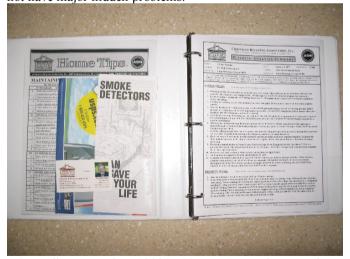
Pre-Listing Inspection?

We had a contract on our house, but it fell through due to a last minute surprise on the inspection report. Is there a way to prevent this from happening in the future?

Your problem is by no means new to the selling process. What is becoming more popular to prevent last minute surprises is pre-listing inspections.

Pre-listing inspections are inspections paid for by the seller before a house is put on the market. They are becoming more popular because they not only reduce the possibility of last minute surprises but also give their clients a marketing advantage when selling their homes.

Some real estate agents only recommend pre-listing inspections when the house is in need of major repair. Others recommend them to all the sellers. Just because the home is newer or in very good cosmetic shape, does not mean it could not have major hidden problems.



According to the "2005 Home Inspection Business Operations Study," conducted by the American Society of Home Inspectors in Des Plaines, Ill., the number of prelisting inspections has been increasing slowly but steadily during the past decade. The study, which is based on a nationwide survey of about 18,000 home inspectors (response rate: 14.7 percent) and covers business operations during the 2004 calendar year, found pre-listing inspections accounted for about 2.6 percent of an inspector's annual business, up from 1.5 percent in 1996. On average, an inspector conducts about 200 home inspections annually.

Although the percentage of pre-listing inspections is still relatively low, the increase is significant, especially as many real estate markets show signs of cooling, says Rob Paterkiewicz, executive director of ASHI based in Des Plaines, Ill. "Sellers are realizing it's not just their market anymore. Thanks to the Internet, potential buyers are walking into homes more knowledgeable than ever before, and sellers know they must do everything they can to sell their house," Paterkiewicz says. He estimates pre-listing inspections might already represent as much as 5 percent of an inspector's business, and he expects the trend to continue.

"A lot of this activity is being driven by real estate practitioners," rather than consumers, says Dan Steward, president of Tampa, Florida based Pillar To Post Inc., a national franchise of home inspection companies, because practitioners want faster transactions with fewer surprises or hiccups.

Like Paterkiewicz, Steward's also seen an increase in prelisting inspection activity. "A pre-listing inspection helps get buyers comfortable with the idea of making an unconditional offer. There's also a greater sense of security because the seller and practitioner are being very forthright, demonstrating that there's nothing to hide."

The need to make certain repairs—such as to mechanical systems (heating and air conditioning, plumbing, and electrical) and to address safety issues (broken locks, loose handrails)—almost goes without saying. But the pre-listing inspection can help the owner and practitioner decide which, if any, of the remaining projects to address before putting the house on the market.

Even if sellers decide not to make any of the suggested fixes, a pre-listing inspection can still prove beneficial, Steward says. For example, it allows sellers to obtain cost estimates for needed work, so they can offer potential buyers an appropriate, not excessive, discount off the listing price.

Listing the potential problems and cost involved to correct the deficiencies before the home is placed on the market will create good-will between the buyer and seller and reduce the stress levels of last minute surprises.

ADDITIONAL INFO CAN BE FOUND AT:

American Society of Home Inspectors

http://www.ashi.org/

National Association of Home Inspectors

http://www.nahi.org/

National Association of Certified Home Inspectors

http://www.nachi.org/prelisting.htm

What Your Home Inspection Should Cover

http://www.realtor.org/rmotoolkits.nsf/pages/consumerE04?OpenDocument

Gaps In Oak Flooring?

My oak flooring was installed three years ago, and some areas are showing shrinkage gaps. This is a random problem, and I wonder if there is a filler I could use in the seams?

Sorry to say, there is not much you can do at this point. Oak flooring expands and contracts with humidity changes and may show some gaps. In fact, on old plank floors, gaps are considered part of the "look." To minimize them, try keeping your home's relative humidity close to 50 percent. During periods of high humidity, you may have to dehumidify (although air conditioning often takes care of it).

I don't recommend that you use a filler; it may look worse than the shrinkage gaps. A non-hardening color putty will fill the cracks, but it will dry and pop out within a year and need redoing. A putty that sets hard can create larger gaps or even buckle the floorboards by not leaving any expansion space. Conversely, it will crack if the floor shrinks.

The real cure for cracks in a wood plank floor is to minimize them in the first place. Here are the two ways excessive cracks develop.

Excessive moisture

The wood flooring has too much moisture content when installed and then shrinks as it "dries out." The solution is to buy dry wood and to acclimate the flooring to the room you want to lay it in. All work that introduces moisture (concrete floors, drywall taping and texturing, painting) must be complete and dry. Then store the wood on location for at least two weeks. A normal humidity level must be maintained during this period (by heating or air conditioning).

Compression set

The wood is too dry to start with, and the flooring absorbs excessive moisture after installation. As the wood expands, the pressure will crush the fibers at the edge of the boards

along tight joints. This is called compression set. When the wood dries out again, it will shrink; the crushed fibers won't completely rebound, and a gap will form. Again, the solution is to acclimate the wood to the space, making sure the humidity is kept close to its normal level.

In all cases, put a coat of finish on new floors as soon as possible, as this will slow down moisture movement into and out of the wood planks.

Source: The Family Handyman February 2002

If you have a question, change of address, comment or home tip, send your letter to Home Tips, Christian Building Inspectors, Inc., 3697 Habersham Lane, Duluth, Georgia, 30096-6111. You can also E-Mail your questions to us at rodharrison@christianbuildinginspectors.com.

Quote Of The Month

"THE TIME TO REPAIR THE ROOF IS WHEN THE SUN IS SHINING." JOHN F. KENNEDY

A The Of The Hat To

Young Sook Park

America's Realty 595 East Crossville Road Roswell, Georgia 30075



<u> Thank You</u>

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