



How to Prepare a Buyer and a Seller for a Home Inspection

By: Patrick Casey, President
Home Buyers Protection Company

A professionally conducted home inspection with a written evaluation and report is becoming a standard procedure in home buying. The number of home inspections has risen dramatically - from less than 10 percent of sales in many metropolitan areas a decade ago, to more than 90 percent in some local areas today!

It is important that both the buyer and the seller be made aware of what a home inspection entails and how they should prepare for it. They should be informed that a home inspection is a professional, objective evaluation of the current condition of a home and its major systems. It is important to explain that a home inspection is not, for example, a guarantee of any kind, a warranty, a termite inspection, an appraisal or a municipal code inspection.

Many real estate professionals have discovered that a pre-purchase home inspection is a useful sales tool when conducted by a qualified home inspection company. When you recommend that a professional home inspection be performed, it reinforces your credibility and shows that you respect the importance of this major purchase.

PREPARE THE BUYERS. Buyers today are informed consumers who want to learn as much as possible about their prospective home. It is, however, important to explain to them that there is no such thing as a perfect home, especially if the home is not new. The inspector's job is to identify the condition of the property, and it is likely that some defects will be found in every home. The inspection should focus on the major systems of the home and their condition. In addition, many inspectors will point out minor items that may be in need of maintenance or repair as well. With home maintenance, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

The buyer should talk to the inspector prior to the inspection and indicate any specific concerns. The inspector should explain exactly what the inspection includes and what the buyer should expect. It is beneficial for the buyer, especially a first-time buyer, to attend the inspection. Additional valuable information can be obtained and misrepresentations can be minimized.

PREPARE THE SELLERS. The seller should be informed of the date and time of the inspection, as well as how long it will take. They should be informed whether or not the buyer will be present. Sellers need your reassurance that all homes require repair as they age and that the home inspection is an objective evaluation.

The sellers need to prepare the home for the inspection as well. Much of the advice applicable to preparing a home for inspection also applies to preparing it to sell. Routine maintenance work should be done prior to the inspection. For instance, mechanical systems should be cleaned and serviced and leaky faucets should be repaired. Other suggestions include: 1) Repair cracked or broken masonry, particularly on the steps, walkways and drive-ways. 2) Check the caulking and grout around the bathtubs and showers and repair as necessary. 3) Examine windows and doors, repair any faulty hardware, replace any rotted wood and cracked glass. 4) Check the drainage around the house. Place additional fill dirt in low spots. Check the gutters and downspouts to make sure they are clean and in place. 5) Clear a path to the mechanical equipment, the electrical panel and the attic access doors. 6) Keep paperwork available, such as receipts for a new furnace or new shingles, records of any major repairs or appliance service and heating and electrical bills.

A properly conducted home inspection by a professional can provide REALTORS® with a significant measure of legal protection against liability for full disclosure, as well as increase your credibility with your customers. Buying and selling a home is a stressful time for all parties involved. By preparing the buyer and seller for the inspection, you will reduce some of the stress and promote satisfaction with the completed sale.