



Home Inspections & Top Problems

Each homebuyer has a different idea of what will constitute the ideal home for them - these notions often based on particular aesthetic preferences. But one thing that unites all potential buyers is the desire to find a home that is fundamentally sound. Finding a property that is safe, comfortable, and efficient, is the foundation to finding happiness in a new home.

This is where the services of a home inspector come in. During a home inspection, numerous areas of the home are placed under the home inspector's 'microscope'. These are professionals who have viewed hundreds of homes in great detail – and used their critical eye to decipher issues not immediately discernible during a showing.

There are numerous areas of weakness that can be uncovered during a typical inspection, but the following are a general idea of some of the more common. If not addressed, these problems could cost you thousands of dollars in the long run. This is not to say the purchase is necessarily a bad one, but it is essential to know entirely what type of home you're considering.

Damp Basement:

If a mildew odor is present, the inspector will be able to detect it, as this smell is impossible to mask or eliminate. Mildew odor is often the first indication of dampness in the basement. The inspector will also examine the walls, checking for any signs of whitish mineral deposit just above the floor, and will note whether you should feel confident enough to store items on the floor.



Repairs can run anywhere from \$200 to \$15,000 (or potentially more), with this cost ultimately influencing the calculation of your home's value. Consider enlisting the help of an expert to ensure you have a firm grasp on the bottom line before moving forward with the sale of your home. Problems may be the consequence of a multitude of reasons, but often is a result of poor (or nonexistent) perimeter drains, poor water proofing, or poorly fitted gutters.



Poorly Installed / Defective Plumbing:



In older homes, plumbing problems and defects are quite common. The inspector will determine whether your home's plumbing is subject to leaking or clogging. At times, signs of leakage can be visibly detected. The inspector will test water pressure by turning on all the faucets in the highest bathroom and then flushing the toilet. If the sound of water is audible, this indicates that the home's pipes may be too narrow. The inspector will also check for signs of

discoloration in the water when a faucet is first turned on. The appearance of dirty water is usually an indication that the pipes are rusted—a water quality problem that should be dealt with immediately. On older homes, it's important to check the diameter of the water lines to the street – especially if you're considering a renovation. Another common plumbing issue arises from polybutylene piping (Poly-B), which is a flexible plastic supply plumbing material that was in used in home construction between 1978 and 1995. Poly-B can be identified by its light grey colour and the permanent markings on the tubing. Some Poly-B plumbing would leak behind drywall and would not be discovered until it became a major issue, with the potential of causing mold.

Older / Poorly Functioning Heating and Cooling Systems:

Heating / cooling systems that are older (or ones that haven't been properly maintained) can pose serious safety and health problems. An inspector will determine the age of your furnace and, and if it is over the average life span of a furnace (15-20 years), will likely suggest you replace it, even if it is still in good condition.

If your heating system is a forced air gas system, the heat exchanger will be examined closely, as cracks can result in the leak of carbon monoxide gas. These heat exchangers are irreparable; if damaged, they must be replaced. While replacing these components may seem expensive, a new system will yield heightened efficiency, reducing monthly heating / cooling costs substantially, and benefiting your long-term investment.





Older / Unsafe Electrical System:

In older homes, it is common to find undersized services, aluminum wiring, knob-and-tub wiring, or insufficient / badly renovated distribution systems. When an electrical circuit is over-fused, more amperage is drawn on the circuit than what the circuit was intended to bear, creating a fire hazard. You'll typically find an electrical service of between 100 to 200 amps in the average home, but in reality, the amperage in homes can range dramatically based on their age (and requirements). Another issue to consider is if you're replacing your fuse panel with a circuit panel, expect a cost of several hundred dollars.

Older/ Leaking Roof:

The most common type of roofing material used today is asphalt-asphalt roofs will last an average of 15 to 25 years. Leaks through the roof could be a sign of physical deterioration of the asphalt shingles caused by aging or could indicate mechanical damage caused by any number of factors, such as a heavy storm. If you decide your roof requires new shingles, you'll first need to know how many layers are beneath and whether proper wood sheathing was installed below, in order to determine whether the roof must be completely stripped before installing the new shingles.



Minor Structural Problems:

Common in older homes, these problems range from cracked plaster or shifted doors sticking to their frames, to small shifts in the foundation. While this variety of problem isn't large enough to cause any real catastrophe, they should be taken care of before they become more serious.

Poor Ventilation:

Unvented bathrooms and cooking areas can become areas of mold and fungus, which, in turn, leads to air quality issues throughout the house, potentially triggering allergic reactions. Additionally, mold may cause damage to plaster and window frames. These problems should be identified and taken care of before any permanent damage is caused.



Air Leakage:

A cold, drafty home can be the result of any number of problems, such as ill-fitting doors, aged caulking, low-quality weather strips, or poor attic seals. This nature of repair can usually be taken care of relatively easily and inexpensively.

Security Features:

An inspector will look at the standard security features that protect your home, such as the types of locks on the doors / windows / patio doors, and the smoke and / or carbon monoxide detectors (and where they're located throughout the home). Check with an expert if your home is lacking in any of these areas, in order to determine what costs to expect.

Drainage / Grading Problems:



This may be the most common problem found by home inspectors and is a widespread catalyst of damp and mildewed basements. Solutions to this problem may range from the installation of new gutters and downspouts, to re-grading the lawn and surrounding property in order to direct water away from the house. If the perimeter drains need repairs or a potential replacement, expect the job to cost in the thousands.