

“THE ASPEC INSIGHT”

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR HOME INSPECTIONS

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The * sections should be read now and the remaining sections before close of escrow

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Introduction

I am here to help you with your real estate purchase, but I can only help you if you will make a commitment to help yourself. To that end, **Your Home Inspection Report** is intended to help you resolve real estate problems—those that happen in the daily course of owning property, those that a friend or relative asks you about, or any other problems or concerns at any time. At any time in the future, you can reference **Your Home Inspection Report** to find information about aspects of real estate and your specific property. **Your Home Inspection Report** is produced to educate you about the property, real estate in general and common conditions and problems concerning real estate, particularly in Ohio. It also contains various information related to home inspections, such as general information about homes, general safety and maintenance information, safety and maintenance tips and tricks, and reference information.

As stated in your Inspection Agreement, the purpose of the property inspection is to document the general, overall condition of the structure and to identify visible defects that are present and visible at the time of the inspection. The property inspection itself is essentially visual and abides by generally accepted standards of practice within the property inspection industry. To that end, **Your Home Inspection Report** will not be comprehensive—it is not the purpose of the property inspection to compile a complete, definitive, or exhaustive list of items that need repair. Although minor flaws and cosmetic defects might be noted in your report, a list of the minor flaws and cosmetic defects noted should not be considered a complete, definitive, or exhaustive list, and should not be relied upon as such.

Occasionally I will recommend further evaluation by licensed specialists, the most common of which are electricians, plumbers, roofing contractors, heating and cooling technicians, pest control professionals, and engineers. Because I am trying to help you protect your investment in your property, I ask only that you give serious consideration to employing those specialists when I recommend them. Notwithstanding any contingencies relating to time, escrow, loans, and purchase contracts, I do not condone trying to save a few hundred dollars by foregoing additional inspections and advice from recommended specialists. Please consult with your Realtor for options available to you under the terms of your purchase contract and any loan applications.

I highly recommend that you read the complete property inspection report before close of escrow and contact me if you have any questions or concerns, or if anything is not completely clear to you. Again, I am here to help you, but I can't do that if you don't ask questions.

InterNACHI Inspection Information (Standards of Practice & Code of Ethics)

The InterNational Association of Certified Home Inspectors (InterNACHI) promotes a high standard of professionalism, business ethics, and inspection procedures. InterNACHI members subscribe to the Code of Ethics in the course of their business.

Please visit our website www.AspecResidential.com – Click on the “Qualifications” button, then click on the links for the [Standards of Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics](#).

Any questions or if you do not have internet access and need a printed version please contact us and we will be more than happy to provide this to you.

Blame the home inspector

Home inspectors nationwide get blamed for a lot of stuff that goes wrong after the property inspection (See [When things go wrong](#) section), especially when the residence is occupied and fully furnished, and even when the residence is vacant and unfurnished—in other words, all the time.

A home inspection is essentially a visual inspection of the structural and mechanical components. A furnished home presents problems for home inspectors because many areas typically are not visible due to floor coverings (carpet, tile, area rugs, etc.), storage, furnishings, packed moving boxes, wall hangings and mirrors, etc. Electric outlets in use typically prevent home inspectors from testing every electric outlet because we’re not going to unplug equipment that belongs to someone else to test an outlet. Interior furnishings and storage many times prevent access to, inspection of, or ability to actually open and close every window, cabinet, closet, or door. Only limited inspection or testing is done when there is not full access.

Here’s what typically happens with occupied and furnished residences. Since the residence is being lived in and systems are being used on a daily basis, it is probable that something will be damaged or fail during the escrow period and during the move-out/move-in process, especially when children are present. Homeowners rarely damage something during escrow and file a claim against their home-owner’s insurance policy because, hey, they (incorrectly) think it’s not even their home anymore. And if they damage something on the last day when they were moving out, do you really think that they’re going to file a claim on it to get it fixed? At that point, they think that you own it—why should they fix something that belongs to you? Some sellers actually do not understand (or do not care) that they still own the home during the escrow period—and even up until all the escrow papers are signed and escrow is closed—and that they should continue to take care of it. In fact, most purchase contracts state so in all that fine print.

Selling a home and leaving after several years can be a stressful event, especially if the sellers raised a family in the home. To help relieve that stress, sellers typically have “moving parties” and “last parties.” Buyers typically have “first parties” or “housewarming parties.” Or they move hurriedly so they don’t have to take too much time off from work or use up vacation days or sick leave. The actual days of moving are when most post-inspection damage occurs, and usually it is by the guests (or movers) helping the owner (seller or buyer) move, so the owner may not even know anything about the damage that has occurred. In both these instances, sellers, when confronted with the damage, like to say, “Your home inspector must not have seen that.” Buyers, upon finding the damage, like to say, “Our home inspector missed that.”

But here’s what we know through experience: Windows and window screens, and doors and door screens, are easily damaged during the escrow period and during the move-out/move-in process, especially in a home with children. Light switches and electrical outlets can be damaged while moving the oversized sofa or bed out the door, or pulling the vacuum cleaner plug out. Light bulbs will burn out or might not work because the light switch was damaged. Because of the location of water supply and drainage pipes in our sink cabinets, where we start cramming things immediately upon move-in, plumbing pipes are easily damaged during the escrow period and during the move-out/move-in process, possibly causing loose pipes and leaks. Lights, wall switches, and outlets (electrical, telephone, and cable) get a lot of use during the escrow period, during the move-out/move-in process, and for those various parties, and thus are easily damaged.

In other words, by the time the buyer is completely moved in, there could be just about anything that isn’t right or isn’t the same as it was on the day of the inspection. That, of course, is the nature of real estate. Also read my special section on [When Things Go Wrong](#).

So how do you remedy all this post-inspection damage? There are a couple of ways. First, I believe the purpose of your final walk-through is not only to make sure that any requested items have been repaired, but also to make sure that additional damage, deterioration, and destruction beyond normal wear and tear has not occurred. I recommend a careful, slow, and thorough observation with your Realtor at your final walk-through to ensure your satisfaction. If you ordered my **STANDARD PLUS** inspection, I will/can be at your final walk-through with you.

Building codes

A property inspection is not a substitute for a building inspection or a code compliance inspection, and I do not interpret or cite building codes. The main reason for this is because of the many codes involved in a property inspection. For example, the licensed plumber is only required to know the plumbing codes, and the licensed electrician is only required to know the electrical codes. If you’ve ever seen either of those two code books, you’d understand why property inspectors don’t cite codes.

Obviously, a working knowledge and a basic understanding of the many codes is a basic knowledge requirement for property inspectors, but inspecting for code compliance and interpreting building codes is the sole and legal responsibility of municipal authorities. A property inspector inspects the visible and accessible areas of a home in accordance with generally accepted national inspection standards.

General code guidelines typically state that building codes are not retroactive in most situations, that buildings are required to be maintained under the code that was in effect at the time of original construction, and that such requirements remain true as long as the building is used for its original intended purpose. However, there’s no way that any property inspector anywhere is going to know all the various codes for as long as codes have been in existence. Therefore, there’s no way a property inspector can comment on codes that were in existence when a home was built in 1955 since codes get updated very two or three years. However, we can use what’s in the current codes as a basis for recommending various upgrades. After all, if it is in the current codes, but it’s not in the property we’re inspecting, we can normally presume that it was not in the codes at the time the property was built.

Of course, general guidelines also state that alterations or repairs must conform to the various building codes required for a new structure without requiring the existing structure to comply with all of the requirements of the codes. Those guidelines go on to state that additions, alterations, or repairs must not cause an existing structure to become unsafe or adversely affect the performance of the building.

So if anyone’s response to an area of concern or a recommendation in **Your Home Inspection Report** is, “Well, they didn’t have that (or they didn’t do that) when the house was built,” I know that. However, during the ensuing years, our knowledge has increased considerably concerning safety in the home, and I believe that you should be safe in your home and that taking care of your home should be as easy as possible. So I will recommend things that they didn’t have or didn’t do years ago simply to keep you safe or help you take care of your home.

Remember that building codes are developed by nationwide experts in particular topic areas. They are then sent to the state where some home builders, a few experts, and politicians decide what is going to be enforced in the state. They are then sent to the local level where mostly home builders and politicians decide what’s going to be enforced locally. They are then given to the code enforcement inspectors to interpret according to how they read the code. In addition, the local code often lags several years behind the national codes. Building codes are not lofty standards. They are the bare minimum legal standard that a home builder, electrician, plumber, etc., must comply with. To do anything less would be illegal.

ASPEC Residential Services serves a large area of Northwestern Ohio with many different building code enforcement authorities, each with their own individual interpretations of the national and state building codes based on their local politics and beliefs. I cannot be completely conversant with each and every building code enforcement authority’s interpretation of the national building codes; therefore I do not perform code compliance inspections nor do I guarantee that all items are in compliance with governing codes, regulations, ordinances, statutes, covenants, and manufacturer specifications. My references and sources for calling out different items as a safety concern, or defective, or marginal, or in need of repair may include the national building codes (International Residential Code, National Electric Code, Uniform Plumbing Code, etc.), manufacturer’s instructions, the building industry’s standards, continuing education, and personal experience.

Cost to repair

I often get asked “How much does it cost to repair that?” Quite frankly, I don’t know all the time. I am a full-time, professional home inspector, and my Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice prevent me from working on properties that I have inspected, so I might not have all the necessary repair experience concerning how much it costs to fix something that I inspected. I do have a construction/repair background, however, but times change and so do costs & pricing, just look at gas prices for example.

Each home and circumstance is different, and a licensed expert at something surely will discover some additional problems that a generalist and unlicensed home inspector cannot (Ohio has no licensing for home inspectors). And I have yet to have any Client or Realtor call me and say, “Hey, it cost \$248.17 to fix that doohickey.” So I’m not being stubborn or anything like that; it’s simply that I really may not know or do not wish to know. My focus is inspecting, not repairing. However, there are several ways to get good estimates:

First, call three repair specialists for the work you need to have done (e.g., plumber, electrician, etc.) and get an estimate from them. These are three Internet sites where you can go to get quality service by caring professionals: www.doneright.com, www.angieslist.com, and the Better Business Bureau at bbb.org. Most licensed professionals charge by the hour, so it truly will be an estimate until they actually do the work. However, once you get three estimates, pretend like you are a judge at the Olympics: Throw out the high and the low and take the middle. That tactic typically (but not always) ensures good materials, good workmanship, and good service without being taken to the cleaners (with no actual clothes involved) by those who would prefer to overcharge you for poor materials, poor workmanship, or poor service.

Second, **Your Home Inspection Report** provides you with a good list of estimates to repair just about anything in your home. Note, however, that, again, they are only estimates, and you’ll find some estimates that say something like “\$2,500 and up.” Well, your “and up” might come in at \$10,000 when all is said and done, so it’s still better to call around and get some repair estimates for your specific situation and for the area where you will be living. Many Realtors or their offices also maintain lists of professionals who have provided quality service to their agents or Clients at some time in the past.

I also often get asked, “Who should repair that?” Since I do not know the qualifications of other people (seller, you, your Realtor, friends, family, etc.) to do repairs, I recommend that you hire a qualified and/or licensed professional in the appropriate trade (If needed, see [Referrals](#) section). You have to decide for yourself if your qualifications, experience, and knowledge, or that of any other person, would result in the repair being done properly. Keep in mind that some sellers tend to repair things using the quickest and least expensive method, sometimes doing it themselves on a weekend (what I call the “Weekend Warrior”), because they just want to sell the house without investing any more money in it. As quite often happens, that quickest and least expensive method, or an unproven or unapproved method by an unknowing individual, leads to premature failure of the repair. Also keep in mind that while many people outside of the professions might be able to make repairs, unless they are licensed in those professions, they typically cannot provide any warranty or guarantee concerning the work. So it still is best to require the seller to use appropriate professionals who can then provide you with receipts and warranties or guarantees concerning their work.

If you have a gut feeling that someone is trying to take you for a ride with high prices and low quality, contact me and I’ll try to help you work through the various estimates you get.

Discussion prior to report

Information in **Your Home Inspection Report** shall always supersede any and all discussion and/or communication (verbal, email, written, and other forms) at the time of the inspection and prior to the report being issued unless such discussion is specifically included in writing.

I often get into discussions about various things with my Clients and their Realtors at the time of the inspection. Unfortunately, many times my Clients don't understand that discussions are simply that, discussions, and that any verbal discussions are not the actual report, and, in all likelihood, many of those discussions won't appear in the report. Read your complete report immediately regardless of what you heard, or think you heard, at the inspection. Read about your prospective property before it becomes your property. Not completely reading **Your Home Inspection Report** immediately is a mistake that could have significant financial repercussions for you in the future.

If you have any questions about any discussions at the time of the inspection, you should try and clarify those discussions with me now, not later. I will try to help you to the best of my abilities. Simply contact me and I'll clear up any misunderstanding.

Errors, typos, and missing items

As much as I hate to admit it, yes, I am human. And while I do make an occasional error, I'm sure they are caused by my computers and the software. In all seriousness, though, if you believe that there is a mistake in **Your Home Inspection Report**, please contact me immediately. I do understand the time contingencies inherent in real estate transactions, and I can get a correction letter to you or our Realtor immediately upon notification, as long as I agree that there is an error. If I need to revisit the property, I'll be happy to do that at no inconvenience to you, although you should always feel free to go with me.

Occasional typographical errors will occur in **Your Home Inspection Report**. I apologize for those in advance. Plurals and singulars are used interchangeably throughout the report and should not be taken to specifically indicate only one or the presence of more than one. When items are naturally grouped together (e.g., lights and switches), it is NOT an indication that all items in the group were present or observed, functioning or not functioning, or did or did not exhibit problems or concerns.

Items that were not present, were not inspected, or had no visible major defects associated with them might not be listed in **Your Home Inspection Report**. They are not necessarily missing items. If I were to put everything in your report that was working, your report would be about 150 pages long, possibly longer. Consequently, if something appears to be missing from your report, then it was either working at the time of the inspection, was not present on the property, or I was asked not to inspect it. I won't always tell you that I didn't have access to a drawer or a closet, but I will tell you when I didn't have access to the attic, the roof, the furnace, the water heater, the garage, etc. If you have any questions about something that appears to be “missing” from **Your Home Inspection Report**, please contact me immediately.

Excessive deferred maintenance, storage, & debris

Excessive deferred maintenance, both inside and outside, often present difficult and dangerous work conditions for me. In most cases, where I find excessive deferred maintenance, I also find excessive furnishings and storage, both inside (see [Figure 1](#)), in the garage (see [Figure 2](#)), and outside. While I strive to prepare an accurate report of the condition of the property at the time of the inspection, it is virtually impossible to do so in such circumstances due to the time-limited nature and generalizations inherent with a property inspection, as well as areas of the property not being visible, not being accessible, or being considered dangerous and unsafe. So be careful while on the property until conditions are improved.

The information contained in **Your Home Inspection Report** should not be construed as an exhaustive, complete, or definitive list of defects and areas of concern under any circumstances since that is not the purpose of a property inspection. However, simply moving into a structure that has been subject to excessive deferred maintenance for any significant period of time means that renovation of any part of the property will expose additional defects which were not noted in **Your Home Inspection Report** because they were not visible at the time of the inspection. In other words, I'm just not going to find everything under these conditions. If you have any concerns about things that might have been missed under the conditions present at the time of the inspection, you should schedule a re-inspection after all the furnishings and storage have been removed from the property, as well as thoroughly checking everything during your final walk-through. If you plan on doing any renovation, you should increase your budget to account for unexpected and unforeseen circumstances due to conditions at the time of the inspection. Additionally, before you close escrow, create a list of service professionals (plumber, electrician, etc.) to call in an emergency situation.

Following are some examples of deferred maintenance from actual inspections:

[Figure 3](#) shows shelf paper holding the tiles to the wall in the shower. When the shelf paper was removed, the tiles fell off the wall, exposing moisture damage to the wall and floor, as well as significant mold growth. The whole bathroom had to be gutted and renovated.

[Figure 5](#) shows a corner of the foundation of a house. There were extraordinarily large cracks in the walls at that area of the house; daylight was visible since the cracks were large enough to put a pencil through. The foundation had disintegrated and virtually disappeared. When the cracks got too large, I guess they found some river rocks to shore up the floor and walls.

If you look at [Figure 6](#), the juxtaposition of the wall of beer cans with the workout equipment would have been funny if my Clients had not discovered many, many holes in the wall during their final walk-through, holes that the sellers had not disclosed. Obviously, the person using the workout equipment took it out on the wall when he didn't meet his workout goals, but he sure had a nice beer can collection. This is a very good example of why you should do more than just laugh at some of the unique conditions that you see at the time of the inspection. So note very carefully the condition of the property both at the time of the inspection and again at your final walk-through.

[Figure 4](#) shows a home owner trying to repair a rusted sink and drain connection with silicone sealant and whatever else (magic putty?). Any repairs should be made with proper materials by qualified personnel. Yes you can temporarily fix things, but what it boils down to is a temporary fix, where ongoing maintenance will be needed.



Figure 1. Excessive furnishings and storage in a bedroom.



Figure 2. Excessive furnishings and storage in the garage.



Figure 3. Shelf paper being used to hold shower tiles in place.



Figure 4. Silicone sealant being used as plumbing repair.



Figure 5. River rocks being used to support the foundation.



Figure 6. Beer can wall in the workout room.

Fire Safety

The installation of smoke alarm(s) is required inside of all bedrooms and in any rooms designated for the purpose of sleeping, and outside within the proximity of the doors to those rooms. Test all alarms and detectors weekly or monthly per manufacture instructions. The installation of carbon monoxide (CO) detector(s) is required in homes with fuel-fired appliances at every floor elevation and any areas where fuel-fired equipment is located. The installation of Type ABC fire extinguisher(s) at the kitchen, laundry, and garage, if applicable, is also advised. Test all of these devices monthly. Install new batteries yearly. Initiate and practice plans of escape and protection for all occupants in case any emergencies arise. Failure to repair defective or install absent alarms, detectors, and other safety equipment immediately can result in serious injury or death. For further information about fire safety and CO poisoning, consult your local fire department and your equipment manufacture(s), and read these links:

www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/464.pdf,

www.carbonmonoxidekills.com, www.nfpa.org/index.asp, and

www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pyfff/inhome.html.

Indoor air quality

I do not test for indoor air quality or pollution. However, indoor air pollution ranks very high on the list of health problems associated with our homes, especially with the advent of vinyl dual-pane doors and windows. Previously, there could be some leakage expected around doors and windows, resulting in the house breathing. With better windows, insulation, weather stripping, sealants, etc., our homes are not allowed to breathe anymore, resulting in our breathing in many of those contaminants that once leaked to the outdoors. If you or anyone in your family, or circle of friends who might visit, have allergy problems or breathing problems such as, but not limited to, asthma, you should have the indoor air quality tested and abatement procedures implemented as necessary. If children under the age of six, any elderly persons, or anyone with a compromised immune system (such as those having had recent surgery, or those with any immune suppressing disease) will be living in or visiting the residence, please consult with a licensed environmental hygienist to help you protect the health of those individuals.

Is my property report a guarantee, a warranty, or insurance?

NO! Your Home Inspection Report IS NOT a guarantee that things won't break down or otherwise become problematic during escrow or at any time after the inspection took place. In many cases, people continued to live in and use the property on a daily basis for many days after the inspection, sometimes as long as several months when rent-back situations are involved. And for vacant residences, well, there wasn't anyone around to take care of things, so things deteriorated and fell apart. Things fall apart just as much from non-use as they do from daily use or from excessive use. I don't know if there was a “haunted house” in your neighborhood when you were growing up, but those haunted houses typically were vacant and were deteriorating due to lack of maintenance and lack of care. So beware of conditions that might have been caused by the sellers during their move-out parties or because they simply believed that they didn't have to take care of things anymore since they were under contract with you to sell you the property. Sellers many times wrongly believe that they don't have to take care of things once they are in escrow with you. Pay special attention during your final walk-through and look for damage that was not visible or was not present at the time of the inspection. Consult with your Realtor now to determine your options for protecting your financial interest in the property, particularly if it has been vacant for any period of time - for more information about vacant properties, please go to our website, www.AspecResidential.com, and click on [The Home Base](#) button, then click on [Vacant Residence](#).

Your Home Inspection Report also IS NOT a warranty on anything. After all, the manufacturers and home builders typically only provide a one-year warranty on things that are brand new. So how could I possibly provide a warranty on something that usually is many years old, that I looked at for only a few minutes, and for which I used the operator controls to simply turn it on and off? I don't.

Additionally, **Your Home Inspection Report IS NOT** insurance of any kind whatsoever because I am not licensed in the State of Ohio as an insurance provider. Providing insurance without a State of Ohio insurance license could result in severe civil and criminal penalties.

Your Home Inspection Report is simply a documentation of the conditions of the property that existed AT THE TIME OF THE INSPECTION. It is a snapshot in time, and any implication that the report is or might be a guarantee, a warranty, or insurance of any kind on your property and its systems and components is expressly denied by me right here. Therefore, I shall not pay for repairs or replacement of items or components just because they broke down or are causing problems after the inspection. That's part of home ownership.

So probably the best thing you can do is to make sure that you get a good insurance policy covering everything about your house (roof, walls, foundation, plumbing, electricity, etc.) and everything in your house (dishwasher, heating and cooling system, etc.). Many sellers provide such a policy for their buyers, but note that sellers are inclined to buy the least expensive policy they can find, with high deductibles and lots of exclusions. I personally believe that insurance definitely is one of those industries where you get what you pay for. So read your policy carefully and take immediate action if the policy is not acceptable to you.

Older structure

Any renovation, remodeling, refurbishment, or rehabilitation (hereafter, “renovation”) of an older structure, or any part of an older structure, might expose defects which were not noted because they were not visible at the time of the inspection. It is highly likely that an older structure has had problems associated with it in the past, such as roof leaks, plumbing leaks, drainage leaks, and damage by wood-destroying pests and organisms.

While I strive to prepare an accurate report of the condition of the property at the time of the inspection by visual means only, it is virtually impossible to do so on an older structure, especially one that either has deferred maintenance or has furnishings and storage in it due to areas not being visible, not being accessible, or being dangerous. Other problems come about when an older structure has undergone renovation since the very nature of such renovation obscures the visible clues that I am looking for about how the structure has reacted to its environment over the years.

The information in your **Your Home Inspection Report** should never be construed as an exhaustive, complete, or definitive list of defects and areas of concern for any structure, much less an older structure, since that is not the purpose of a property inspection.

Many older structures have various items in them that are no longer used because they are known to present health hazards. Such items include, but are not limited to, lead or polybutylene plumbing pipes; asbestos ceiling and flooring tiles, as well as various types of insulation; and knob and tube electrical wiring. In some cases, when such items are located in attics, it is virtually impossible for me to determine their presence since doing so would require removing all the insulation in the attic, as well as any storage, a task that would be time-consuming and expensive, and thus is not within the scope of the property inspection. I do look around where conditions allow me, and if I find such items, I’ll note them in **Your Home Inspection Report**.

Newer technology has resulted in certain items that make our homes inherently safer, such as GFCI outlets and AFCI circuit breakers. When I find such items not present, I’ll note that fact in **Your Home Inspection Report** and recommend that you upgrade your property to include them.

Recommendations

- Û Recommend adjusting renovation budgets for unexpected or unforeseen circumstances.
- Û Recommend creating a list of service professionals (plumber, electrician, etc.) for use in an emergency situation; this should be done before move-in.

Ongoing monitoring

Your inspection is like a “snapshot” of the property’s condition on a specific date and time. Those conditions will change, so you need to keep inspecting your property during the time you own it. Verify that the air conditioning condensate water is draining properly to the exterior or other source after operation on a hot day. Verify that the dryer vent is exhausting properly. Verify that the gutters and downspouts are performing during a hard rain. Verify that no water is ponding on the property after a hard rain. Verify that no dimming or flickering of lights occurs. Verify that no repeated resetting of any circuit breakers is necessary. Verify that the quantity of the hot water supply is adequate. Verify that the performance of the HVAC systems are adequate. Verify that any thermostat controlled electric attic fans are operating. Verify that no leaking is present in the attic area during a hard rain. And inspect any of the other concerns that were mentioned in **Your Home Inspection Report**.

Personal property

Certain appliances are considered personal property, even when conveying with real estate. Testing, inspection, analysis, or opinion of condition or function of personal property is not within the scope of a home inspection. Such personal property includes, but is not limited to, space heaters, window air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, washers, dryers, washer/dryer combination units, televisions, stereo systems, and countertop microwave units.

Property inspectors as movers

I often get asked why I didn't move something during the course of my inspection, and every answer I give always comes back to insurance concerns.

I do not know what's in the boxes, how much an item might have cost, or the special sentimental history of any item, so my insurance precludes me from moving something and possibly damaging it. Even the unlikeliest-looking item could be a priceless heirloom, or a priceless heirloom or artifact could be in that common cardboard box. I don't like to damage things (I would feel pretty bad if it happened), but even when I do, I still don't like paying for it. So I don't want to be paying for something that someone said I broke or damaged (it might already have been broken or damaged), like the last known picture of someone's grandmother or the priceless Ming vase from China (what's it doing in the attic if it's so priceless?). Unfortunately, there are plenty of horror stories in the property inspection industry about inspectors moving things and damaging them, and my insurance premiums are already too high, so I just don't move things.

Additionally, if I were to move only one item, I might be asked why I didn't move every item. Where do I draw the line? Obviously, time constraints preclude me from moving every item, so, again, I just don't move things; it's either all or none. Remember, property inspectors are not movers, and I do not know of any movers who are property inspectors. They are two different professions.

If you have any concerns about an area that was not visible or accessible at the time of the inspection, which is pretty common in furnished homes, you should make sure that those areas are looked at again before close of escrow. A good time to do that is at your final walk-through. I am available for re-inspections when conditions warrant it—remember that I am a professional, so I do charge for my time.

Questions about your property report

Buying and selling real estate is a very complicated process. I highly recommend that you use a Realtor to help you with your transaction.

Realtors are like home inspectors. They come from various backgrounds but have had to go through a significant amount of training to enter their chosen profession. Realtors understand buying and selling real estate, including inspection reports. I believe their knowledge and expertise is invaluable to you in your real estate transaction. However, while Realtors know a lot about inspections and inspection reports, they are not inspectors. And while home inspectors know a lot about real estate, they are not Realtors. Seek help from the appropriate professional when you need it.

If there are any questions about the information in **Your Home Inspection Report**, please call me first, and then call your Realtor. I will also let your Realtor know whenever you call me with a question. And if I get any questions from anyone else regarding your inspection, such as the seller, the seller's Realtor, or any repair persons, I'll let both you and your Realtor know.

Recalls

ASPEC Residential Services does not research product recalls or notices of any kind. A basic home inspection does not include the identification of, or research for, appliances and other items installed in the home that may have been recalled or have had a consumer safety alert issued about it. Any comments made in the report are regarding well known notices and are provided as a courtesy only. Product recalls and consumer product safety alerts are added almost daily by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. We recommend visiting the following Internet sites if recalls are a concern to you: www.cpsc.gov or www.recalls.gov Item(s), brand name(s), and model number(s) will be required for proper identification.

Referrals

I have a list in our office of some local trades people whom I would trust to do work for me. This does not necessarily constitute a recommendation or endorsement for you to hire them.

The list contains some businesses that I recommend. Notwithstanding that, please note that even personal referrals sometimes fail to provide satisfactory service for whatever reason. I take personal referrals very seriously, so if you choose to use these businesses, please let me know if their products or services are not satisfactory to you. Please contact our office if you need a referral.

Taking care of your home

It is not easy being a homeowner, and there will be many things that will become problems while you own your home—you will need to spend money on them to resolve them. I recommend proactive preventive maintenance rather than after-the-fact reactive repair. To that end, throughout **Your Home Inspection Report** you might find the phrase “Recommend regular homeowner monitoring and maintenance.” This phrase means that things will fall apart or become problems, particularly if you don’t take care of them.

The easiest way to take care of your house is to keep water and moisture away from the exterior, particularly the foundation, and out of the interior, particularly the attic, closets, and cabinets. This means regular monitoring and maintenance. What is regular monitoring and maintenance? Home ownership!

Home ownership means little or no watering next to your foundation, which translates into no high-water-use vegetation next to your foundation. What’s a high water-use plant? Typically, it’s big plants and plants that have large foliage, lots of roots, or lots of flowers. Keeping moisture away from the house also means regular monitoring and maintenance of the exterior walls, foundation, and roof, and the structural and mechanical components attached to them.

Some items in your home need to be monitored and maintained daily (e.g., sink cabinets), monthly (e.g., GFCI outlets), or annually (roof, water heater, furnace etc.). You’re investing a substantial amount of money in a home. Please take care of it or hire professional service personnel to take care of it for you.

Testing methods and further evaluation

I have certain steps that I go through, my inspection protocol, to test and evaluate appliances (heating and cooling, dishwasher, etc.) and systems (showers, sinks, toilets, etc.) in your new home, and I perform these steps in a certain order to ensure three things: (1) the unit is properly tested, inspected and evaluated (2) without causing any property damage and (3) without causing personal injury to anyone near the appliance (that includes me!).

Step one typically is a “yes” or “no” to this question: “Does it look like it will work properly?” If yes, I proceed to step two. If no, I quit evaluating that appliance or system and state the reason why it did not look like it would work properly. In my report, I might state, “Unit not tested. Recommend further evaluation before close of escrow.” This does not mean that you can simply move in and start using the appliance or the system. It means that further evaluation must be completed before the appliance or system is used. I recommend that further evaluation be completed by qualified personnel, usually licensed in their profession under State of Ohio laws (plumbers, electricians, etc.). Such professionals typically will evaluate the complete appliance or system during their evaluation to make sure that it is fully functional.

When further evaluation is performed, that licensed professional will have their own inspection protocol, again, designed specifically to do determine what the problem is without causing property damage or personal injury. They should at least begin the evaluation process all over again and should not start in the middle of anyone else’s evaluation, including mine. Additionally, that licensed professional should not rely on any statements by an individual not licensed in that profession, such as me. Keep in mind that home inspectors are not licensed in any profession, even including home inspecting since the State of Ohio does not license home inspectors. Relying on statements of others without verifying them can result in property damage, personal injury, or death, especially since no one except the person currently inspecting the appliance can possibly know what might have happened to anything since the last time someone (me!) inspected, tested, or evaluated the appliance.

In some instances, depending on the initial problem, evaluation by the licensed professional might be much more extensive than a home inspector’s evaluation. That’s why they charge more, and that’s why I only recommend them when absolutely necessary. It’s kind of like your family doctor, also called a “General Practitioner.” If you have a chest pain, you’d make an appointment with your family doctor. You’ve done the initial evaluation (“I have a chest pain.”) Upon “further evaluation” by the family doctor, he says you need some x-rays or an MRI. He’ll send you for “further evaluation” to the laboratory. Once you get that done, you’ll go back to him for more “further evaluation.” Let’s say that the x-rays or MRI indicate that you have some blocked heart arteries and need surgery. Who do you think will do the surgery? Not the family doctor! He’ll send you for “further evaluation” to the heart surgeon. When you get to the heart surgeon, he’ll read the family doctor’s report, look at the x-rays or MRI, and then do his own evaluation, perhaps even having some more x-rays or MRI taken. In every case, the family doctor is far less expensive than the heart surgeon.

Home inspectors are like your family doctor. We’re inexpensive because we’re “General Practitioners.” We know something about everything, but everything about nothing. So if I find something wrong with the electric panel, I’ll recommend “further evaluation” by a licensed electrician, equivalent to the heart surgeon. That licensed electrician, due to his licensing and expertise, is considered by the State of Ohio to be more knowledgeable about electricity than an unlicensed home inspector.

So, as stated in your *Inspection Agreement*, I’m looking for the big problems that can cost you a significant amount of money, are extremely dangerous, or, if not corrected soon, can causes significant property damage. If

I find the big problem, and then there is no reason for me to try to document any other problems. The simple fact is that it doesn’t look like it’s going to work. Many times a problem can only be detected when something is being used, so if it doesn’t look like one can use it safely and for the purpose for which it was intended, I don’t go any further.

If I did try to document all the other problems, your home inspection would have lasted many more hours and cost substantially more than what you paid, and **Your Home Inspection Report** might have become unwieldy, unreadable, and/or undecipherable. So, again, I’m looking for the biggest problems first and then the more minor or cosmetic problems. This is also the reason why I offer different inspection types for different Clients with different wants and needs.

Many home issues such as those disclosed in **Your Home Inspection Report** can be interpreted and acted on in different ways depending on your needs and any advice that you might solicit from third parties, especially those who were not at the property at the time of the inspection and don’t know what the conditions of the property were at the time of the inspection. Additionally, your intended use of a property might result in varying opinions about what you should do about some of my recommendations in **Your Home Inspection Report**. Therefore, if you have any questions about anything, please contact me.

With that said, I highly recommend that you do not summarily dismiss my recommendations in **Your Home Inspection Report**, and do not let anyone else convince you to summarily dismiss my recommendations. If you have any questions about my recommendations, you should contact the source of the recommendations: me! Please feel free to contact me at any time. I am happy to talk with you and your representatives to explain my recommendations in further detail if necessary.

We try to answer our phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Personal hygiene, stuffing our mouths with food, and lack of cooperation by the providers of my telephone communication services sometimes will prevent us from answering the phone all the time. So if you get voice mail or the answering machine, simply leave a message, and we’ll get back to you as soon as we get your message.

When things go wrong (also known as home ownership)

I am a generalist

I am not acting as a specialist in any specific trade. I know something about everything but everything about nothing, commonly known as a Jack-of-all-trades. Ohio does not have licensing for property inspectors, yet many Clients expect me to know everything that a licensed electrician knows, that a licensed plumber knows, that a licensed roofing contractor knows, that a licensed structural engineer knows, that a licensed heating and cooling professional knows, that a licensed general contractor knows, etc. The list goes on and on. If all of those licensed professionals had come out to inspect your home, yes, you would probably have received a much more detailed report than that provided by any property inspector in the State of Ohio. However, your property inspection also would have cost several thousand dollars.

So, yes, those licensed professionals have more expertise than I do in their specific professions. But ask a licensed plumber about structural engineering and you're probably not going to get as much as you get from a property inspector. Ask a licensed electrician about plumbing, and you're probably not going to get as much as you get from a property inspector. So while property inspectors are expected to know heating and cooling, plumbing, electricity, engineering, roofing, etc., it is virtually impossible to know everything about everything. That's why I'm a generalist. *I'm looking at the forest, not the individual trees.*

Intermittent or concealed problems

Some problems can only be discovered by living in a house. They cannot be discovered during the few hours of a property inspection. For example, some shower stalls leak only when people are in the shower but do not leak when you simply turn on the water faucet or shower head. This is because the weight of a person in the shower will cause the shower or bathtub, or the walls, to flex slightly, perhaps causing a small separation somewhere that allows water to penetrate only during actual use of the bathtub or shower.

Some roofs only leak when specific conditions exist, and we've never seen a roof that leaks during dry weather, although some conditions (like a hole in the roof) will definitely indicate that the roof will leak next time it rains.

Some problems will only be discovered when floor coverings are removed (like removing the 1970s vinyl in the bathrooms to put in tile); when furniture is moved (the large hole in the wall that was concealed by the bed); when pictures are taken down (the large hole in the wall that was covered by Grandma's picture); when wallpaper, wall mirrors, and paneling are removed (revealing past or present moisture damage).

No clues

Problems might have existed at the time of the inspection but there were no clues as to their existence, such as when a room has been recently painted. Inspections are based on the history of the house. If there are no clues of a past problem, it is unfair to assume that I could foresee a future problem. This becomes particularly troublesome when an older home is completely renovated. Yes, it probably looks beautiful, but when all the cracks in the walls and ceilings were covered up when the new drywall was installed, it is impossible for me to tell you that there are settling issues or foundation problems.

I try to find the individual problems and add them together to determine if there are bigger problems. Renovation, either partial or complete, can make that job impossible because it makes the home look like a newer home rather than an older home. New homes don't exhibit problems yet, so what you see might not be what you get months or years down the road. With older homes, what you see is what you get; now just decide what to do about it.

I missed some minor things

The minor problems that I identified were discovered while looking for more significant problems. I note them simply as a courtesy to you. The intent of the inspection is not to find all the problems that might cost a few dollars, or even a few hundred dollars, but to find the problems that will cost you thousands of dollars (which hopefully none are found). It typically is the significant problems that affect people’s decisions to buy a particular house after they have already fallen in love with it.

However, depending on the type of inspection, I will note minor problems or cosmetic defects because the cost of correcting all of those might be significant. For example, a hole in a screen window can be patched for twenty bucks or so, or re-screened for fifty bucks or so, or replaced for a hundred bucks or so. In the overall scheme of things, that’s not significant. But now take a hole in each of seventeen screen windows. The cost of patching, re-screening, or replacing can now become significant. So during the inspection, since I don’t know how many of those minor things I will find until I’m actually through with the inspection, I try to note them all. And then, again depending on the type of inspection you or your Realtor asked us to do, I’ll note the minor problems in **Your Home Inspection Report** and let you decide which problems you can deal with yourself or are willing to accept, and which problems you would like to ask the seller to repair.

Obviously, it takes me more time to note all the minor problems and then to document them in **Your Home Inspection Report**. Some Clients, such as those who are going to completely gut and renovate a property, don’t want to know about the minor problems, so I offer them the opportunity to save some money by not asking me to document them. Others—such as those buying a brand new home, or those who are out of state at the time of the inspection and, in the world of virtual tours on the Internet, might never have visited the property—want me to document every last little scratch or nick. And while I don’t do scratches and nicks, those Clients are the ones who want to know about the minor problems and the cosmetic defects.

I’ll do whatever my Clients want me to do because I believe in providing choices. However, I can’t pretend to know if you have chosen wisely for your own specific needs or why you made the choice you did.

Recommendations

I make recommendations for your safety and to help you with common maintenance tasks. If you disregard my recommendations, you might risk your health and safety, or risk damage to your home and possessions. Buying a home is expensive, but I cannot condone ignoring my recommendations to save a few dollars. Even if you are very capable of doing the repair work, it should be done now, before you move in. After you move in, you might forget about it because other things take up your valuable time, such as when you’re going to have the house warming party, who you’re going to invite, and what you’re going to serve—are you going to cook or have it catered? Ignoring my recommendations is a risk that only you can evaluate.

I also hope that you will not let anyone else convince you to summarily dismiss my recommendations, as happens too often. I regularly hear people say, “Oh, they didn’t have that when the house was built” or “That wasn’t required when the house was built.” I know that. But in the ensuing years, disasters in the form of property damage, death, and injury have convinced us that there are better ways to do things than what might have been done “when the house was built.” So take care of things now, while they are fresh on your mind.

“Last man in” theory and most recent advice

While the recommendations in my reports represent what I believe are the best ways to resolve problems, many contractors don't like to make repairs because of the “Last man in” theory. For example, a roofing contractor believes that if he is the last person to work on the roof, he will get blamed if the roof leaks, regardless of whether or not the roof leak is his fault. Home owners rarely remember that the electrician worked on electric wires on top of the roof four months ago. All they remember is that the roof leak now must somehow be related to the roofing contractor who worked on the roof “a few months ago.” Therefore, roofing contractors don't want to do a minor repair with high liability when they could re-roof the entire house for more money and reduce the likelihood of a callback and an unhappy customer, which makes perfect sense. It is also human nature for home owners to believe that the most recent expert has the best advice, even if it is contrary to previous advice.

As a property inspector, I find myself in the position of “First man in” and, therefore, it is my advice that is most often dismissed when the next person comes along. In fact, many other professionals who don't want to make repairs will blame the property inspector and try to make me look like an idiot: “Oh, there's nothing wrong with that. I can't believe your property inspector said there was.” Obviously, since there is no licensing for property inspectors in the State of Ohio, I have to defer to the opinions and recommendations of experts who are licensed. So in those cases where those licensed professionals state something contrary to what I said, all I ask is that you have them do the same thing I did: put their opinions in writing on their company letterhead and sign and date it. That's what I did with **Your Home Inspection Report**, so that's the least that they can do. Too often, they decline.

Contractors' advice and why I didn't see it

A common source of dissatisfaction comes from comments made by contractors, which often differ from mine. Don't be surprised when someone says that something needed to be *replaced* when I said it needed to be *repaired or replaced*. Having something replaced makes more money for the contractor than just doing a repair. Contractors sometimes say, “I can't believe you had this house inspected and they didn't find this problem.” There are several reasons for these apparent oversights, as explained below:

Conditions during inspection

It is difficult for home owners to remember the conditions in the house at the time of the inspection, so I doubt that any contractors you hire will know what the circumstances were when the inspection was conducted. And home owners seldom remember that there was storage everywhere, making things inaccessible, or that the air conditioning could not be turned on because it was 50° outside.

I do take many pictures at the time of the inspection and even include a few of those in **Your Home Inspection Report** to remind you of the conditions at the time of the inspection. If a picture is not included, I typically will tell you in words what I did and didn't do, what I could and could not do, and what I will and will not do when it comes to property damage and personal safety. Many times the conditions at the time of the inspection can be embarrassing to the seller, so I don't include all pictures. Think what might be going through the seller's mind if I included too many pictures, such as the waste material that we find in toilets (unfortunately, way too often). And when you got your home inspection report out several months later to look up something, I'm not sure the picture of the toilet problem would be something that you would care to look at once again. I really do try not to embarrass anyone during my inspections, when compiling my reports, or anytime after the inspection.

Lengthy inspections

If I spent half an hour under the kitchen sink or an hour disassembling the furnace, an hour disassembling the cooling condenser, several hours removing all the covers for electrical outlets and light switches, I'm sure I would find many more problems than those I found and noted in **Your Home Inspection Report**.

Unfortunately, the inspection would take several days and would cost a few thousand dollars. I do offer those types of inspections at those types of prices, but they are not the norm. In most cases, though, I try to do in the course of a few hours everything that a home owner would do in the course of many months. I could take several months to do everything, but, again, the cost to you would be exorbitant and certainly would not meet the property inspection time contingency period in your purchase contract.

Invasive or destructive testing

I could have done invasive or destructive testing for you if you had requested it of me, had agreed to pay for any damage that I might have caused, and had the Seller's written consent to invasive or destructive testing. With all of that done, I might have found all sorts of problems, but I don't think you would have liked it when you were presented a bill from the seller for hundreds or thousands of dollars worth of damage that I caused during my invasive and destructive testing, especially if you decided not to buy the property for whatever reason. And I sure don't want to pay for that damage myself. Remember that the property at the time of the inspection didn't belong to you or me; it belonged to someone else. As a property inspector, I really do try to be a good citizen during the performance of my job while I'm on someone else's property. I can only do so much.

The wisdom of hindsight

When problems occur, it is very easy to have 20/20 hindsight. Anybody can say that the roof is leaking when it is raining outside and the roof is leaking. It is virtually impossible in the midst of a hot summer heat wave condition at the time of the inspection to say that the roof will leak the next time it rains, unless there are obvious signs. Predicting problems is not an exact science and is not part of the property inspection process. *I am only documenting the condition of the home at the time of the inspection. Your inspection report is merely a snapshot in time to help to try to beat the odds of owning a home.*

I hope this has helped you understand what I have tried to do for you, and why problems occur after the property inspection.

Have you read the complete report? It provides safety and maintenance information as well as common problems and methods for addressing those common problems. It also tells you what I did and didn't do, what I could and couldn't do, and what I would and wouldn't do if personal safety or property damage was involved. If you don't understand something, or if I did not make myself clear, please contact me (I'm available by cell-phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including all holidays and major sporting events—Super Bowl, World Series, etc. Also feel free to visit our web site at www.AspecResidential.com

We again would like to once again thank you for using our services and we sincerely hope Your Home Inspection Experience was educational and insightful.