

Choosing a Home Inspector

by Ernest Borsellino

Most contracts for the sale of real estate have a clause stating that the contract is contingent upon an inspection of the premises by a qualified inspector “within 7 or 10 business days after the end of the Attorney Review Period”. Too often the purchaser waits until after signing a contract to inquire about a home inspection company.

This adds to the pressure of buying a home and can sometimes force the purchaser to hire an inspection company without knowing their qualifications. Most consumers do not know how to judge the professional qualifications and experience of a home inspector and can be easily impressed by a good sales pitch. Neither warranties nor insurance policies can take the place of the knowledge and experience of a qualified home inspector.

Here are a few helpful questions that should be asked and considered when choosing a home inspection company:

- **Company Qualifications:** Does the inspection company belong to any professional organizations and what type of continuing education programs do they attend? ASHI (American Society of Home Inspectors) is a non-profit professional organization in the US that rigorously tests home inspectors on their technical knowledge and diagnostic expertise in relation to residential construction. In addition to the testing required to become a certified member, all members must acquire continuing educational credits annually to maintain ASHI membership status.
- **Company Longevity:** How long has the firm been in business as a home inspection company? If less than two years, what is their previous experience. Inspectors should have a general knowledge of all the components of the home (roofing, electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, etc.).
- **Inspectors Experience:** Is the inspector knowledgeable in the construction of the home to be inspected? While most home inspectors are knowledgeable in all types of construction, one may be more experienced than another for a particular home. How many home inspections has the inspector performed, is another way to judge the inspectors experience?
- **Specifics of the Inspection:** What will be inspected and more importantly, what will not be inspected? If the home inspection company follows the guidelines of ASHI ask for a copy of ASHI's Standards of Practice.
- **Length of Inspection:** How long will the inspection take? An average inspection should last from 2 to 2½ hours. Anything less should be considered a walk through and not a complete inspection.
- **Report Type:** What type of report will be issued? A check-off list may be appropriate for some inspections; however, a typed written report is most explicit. A well written narrative report can better explain the aspects of the home that may need to be addressed by others that were not present for the inspection. (ex. Lawyers, Realtors, Banks, etc.).
- **Who should attend:** It is advisable for the purchasers to be present for the entire inspection. If the Realtor is also present this can help simplify any items that may need to be discussed to finalize the transaction.
- **Cost:** Of course, the obvious question which is normally the first to be asked, is cost. Keep in mind that the cheaper the price does not necessarily mean the best deal. Inquiring about home inspection companies ahead of time can help eliminate one less worry that needs to be dealt with after a contract is signed.

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