

Alert Home Inspections

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Most Common Defects Found

1. **Roofing defects:** Problems with roofing material, due to aging, wear, or improper installation, are likely to be found in the majority of homes. This does not mean that most roofs require replacement, but rather that most could use some type of maintenance or repair.
2. **Ceiling stains, indicating past or current roof leaks:** Unfortunately, you often can not tell if the roof still leaks unless you inspect on a rainy day. Some stains are merely the residual effects of roof problems that have been repaired, while others may be related to leaky plumbing.
3. **Water intrusion into basements or crawlspaces due to ground water conditions:** Faulty drainage can be pervasive, difficult to resolve, and sometimes very damaging to buildings. Correction can be as simple as re-grading the exterior grounds or adding roof gutters. Unfortunately, major drainage improvements are often warranted, requiring costly ground water systems such as french drains designed by geotechnical engineers.
4. **Electrical safety hazards, especially (but not always) in older homes:** Examples are ungrounded outlets, lack of ground fault interrupters (shock protection devices), faulty wiring conditions in electrical panels or elsewhere in a building, etc. Such problems may result from errors at the time of construction but often are due to wiring that was added or altered by persons other than qualified electricians.
5. **Rotted wood at building exteriors and at various plumbing fixtures:** In areas where wood remains wet for long periods, e.g. roof eaves, exterior trim, decks, around tubs and showers, or below loose toilets, fungus infection is likely to attack, resulting in a condition commonly known as dry rot. If left unchecked, damage can be quite extensive.
6. **Building violations where additions and alterations were constructed without permits:** Homeowners will often tell a home inspector, "We added the garage without a permit, but it was all done to code." This is a red flag to most inspectors, because no one could possibly know the entire building code, let alone the average person without construction knowledge. Whenever an owner offers code assurance, problems are likely to be found.
7. **Unsafe fireplace and chimney conditions:** Problems with wood burning fixtures can range from lack of maintenance to faulty installation. Most common are missing spark arrestors and faulty placement of freestanding fireplaces. Wood-burning stoves are typically installed by homeowners and handymen, persons without adequate knowledge of fire safety requirements. Common violations involve insufficient clearance between hot metal surfaces and combustible materials within the building. Fire hazards of this kind are often concealed in attics, where they remain undiscovered until a roof fire occurs.
8. **Faulty installation of water heaters:** In most localities, less than 5% of all water heaters are installed in full compliance with plumbing code requirements. Common violations include inadequate strapping, improperly installed overflow piping, unsafe flue conditions, or faulty gas piping. Today's water heaters are designed to have shorter longevity than in years past. Leaks can develop in units that are only five years old.
9. **Hazardous conditions involving gas heaters:** Most gas-fueled heaters are in need of some maintenance, if only the changing of an air filter or a long-overdue review by the gas company. In some cases, however, gas heaters contain life-threatening defects that can remain undiscovered until too late. These can range from fire safety violations to the venting of carbon monoxide into the building. A cracked firebox, for example, can remain undiscovered unless found by an expert or until tragic consequences occur.
10. **Firewall violations in garages:** Special fire-resistive construction is required for walls and doors that separate a garage from a dwelling. Violations are common, due to faulty construction, damage or alterations to the garage interior, or changes in code requirements since the home was built. In older homes, where firewalls are not installed, sellers and agents will often suggest that the building predates the code. However, the fire separation requirement for residential garages dates back to 1927.