

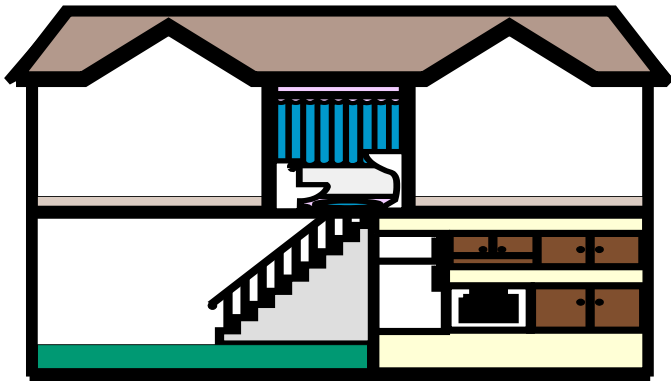


# FEBRUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

## A Home Inspection Provides an Education

The rule (compared to the exception) in home purchasing today includes the pre-purchase home inspection as an essential part of the sales transaction. Though you may be a veteran in real estate business, it's sometimes good to revisit why a home inspection makes sense for your client.

The professional home inspector can offer consumers expert opinions on the condition of a house and its major components before the purchase is made. This same inspection can also buy peace of mind for those in the market for a new home.



But peace of mind and condition reports are not the only good reasons for pre-purchase inspections. Inspections also serve as an educational tool for homebuyers. They may learn where various systems are located. It is important to know the location of gas and water lines. In the case of an emergency – or if remodeling is desired – the homeowner should know where utility lines enter the house and how to shut them off. It is also just as important to know the location of the electric and heat emergency switches.

During the inspection, the potential homeowners should get a basic understanding of the electrical wiring of a house and its capacity. An inspector can explain the operation of circuit breakers or switches. He may also evaluate the existing wiring to see if it's adequate for the home's electrical load.

Private homes also have many components not found in apartments, which might intimidate the first time homebuyer. Among these systems are the central air conditioning, heating system, water heater, humidifiers and septic tanks. An inspector can walk potential buyers through a home and “introduce” them to the home's components and provide some basic information about each.

Another plus about having an inspection is that the buyer will be able to voice his concerns to an unbiased third party. After receiving expert advice, the buyer may learn that his fear is unsubstantiated and make the purchase.

## Happy Valentine's Day!

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## How To Hire A Plumber

When there's water all over, and the pipes are bad, who you gonna call? Well, the obvious answer is a repair plumber, that special person who can solve all of your water problems with a piece of pipe and a turn of the wrench. How can a client be sure he's getting the right person for the job?

Well, first of all, he can make sure the plumber called is one who specializes in repair, not construction. (Yes, physicians aren't the only ones who specialize!) Clients should ask for the plumber's rates before hiring. It's always smart to get two or three bids, then obtain and check references. It's also smart to check the contractor's license number and consult the issuing agency to determine the plumber's standing and reputation.

To keep costs down, the homeowner can do some of the "rough work" - such as digging trenches or opening walls - himself. If the plumber can easily get to the real "water works," it will cut down on the time it takes him to complete the job - and the amount that is charged for it. The best way to discuss the work a plumber is doing is to have knowledge of it. Homeowners should learn as much as they can about the systems, fittings, and features that will be affected by the work. That way, he will be able to discuss and understand the various options offered to him by the plumber he hires.

### **As a Realtor<sup>®</sup>, you're being hired for what you know.**

So help your clients be better informed by sharing the following information:



⊞ The proper placement of plants can regulate heat loss and gain - and help control energy costs! For energy landscaping, try deciduous trees. Their branches are bare during the winter, allowing the sun to warm the house during colder months. Their leafy boughs will provide shade during summer months, cooling living spaces and protecting them from direct sunlight.

⊞ A pleasant way to raise the value of a property is to think of your lawn as the "outdoor room" — and maintain it accordingly.

⊞ Metropolitan homeowners like to spend where they live. On average, they invest about \$4000 a year in home maintenance and repairs.



## ASK THE INSPECTOR

**What tips can you share to make our bathroom safer?**

*Erick's Response:*

Home injuries send more than 20 million people to an ER annually. Fortunately, you can defend yourself and your family against such injuries by carefully checking each room of your home. This checklist for a bathroom inspection can minimize the mishaps:

- Non-skid decals and bathmats are cheap. But they're an important investment that will prevent slipping in the tub.
- A grab bar installed into studs in the shower wall will provide extra support for anyone getting in or out.
- Handheld showers or shower seats are recommended for those who have trouble standing in the shower.
- No matter what protection is in the tub, a parent should always be by the tub when a child is bathing.
- Toilet locks can keep small hands — and faces — out of water.
- Never use portable heaters in the bathroom, where wet floors will conduct electricity and pose a hazard.
- Small electrical appliances, like hair dryers and heated curlers, should be unplugged when not in use and stored once they're cool.