

Home Inspections - The Etiquette of Scheduling

Years ago, I never really gave much consideration to cancelling an appointment last minute, especially when it was something I wasn't particularly looking forward to, like having a tooth filled. However, self employment has given me a much different perspective. In fact, like most inspectors, last minute cancellations remain a great source of frustration. Often times I have already turned away a client who has since found another inspector. It then becomes impossible to fill the sudden scheduling void. Personally, I average losses of \$5000.00 a year due to such cancellations. Multiply that by the ten years I have been in business and, well, the math is obvious.

For a buyer considering a home purchase and inspection, a few rules of etiquette will go a long way when it comes to scheduling that inspection. Here are a some things to consider before you make the call:

Do you have loan approval? Too many times I have had cancellations because a buyer's loan approval did not go through. Having secured a time slot with an inspector is not the time to find out you can't get a loan.

Do you have mutual acceptance? Mutual acceptance means the seller has accepted your offer in writing. If you have made that offer subject to an inspection, **now** is the time to call and schedule.

Do you have all the information? The inspector will need to know size, age, type of structure, if it is occupied, whether there are any outbuildings and so on. Be clear about address and directions, especially in rural areas. I once spent an hour looking for an address that was actually in a different town than I was led to believe.

Are the utilities are on? In today's market with short sales and repos, this can be a challenge. Be aware that because of liability issues, inspectors will not turn on utilities. Unfortunately, inspecting homes with no power or water increases the odds that some conditions may not be discovered. Hopefully your Realtor can make arrangements for the utilities to be on.

Make sure the seller knows. Typically, your real estate agent will handle this. They will also try to make sure the seller is gone during the inspection. If you are not working with an agent, which I strongly advise against, this will fall on you.

Be flexible. Many times buyers request weekend or evening appointments because of their work schedule. An established inspector knows he must look out for number one. Making a habit out of scheduling inspections on the weekends or evenings *and* working a full week during the day is a recipe for burnout, injury and illness. And when that happens, those who referred to him will just move on to another inspector. That's the way of the world. Therefore, buyers who can be more flexible with their schedules may find better success setting an appointment with the inspector of their choice.

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