

Navigating Through the Home Inspection Report

For inspectors, there are many different reporting formats to choose from which operate on a variety of data collection methods. These may range from a simple written checklist to a sophisticated computer generated report where information is entered on a PDA. Regardless, there are some basic components to look for in any professionally prepared report:

Professional associations set forth standards which address what should be inspected and what should be documented. Inspection reports will therefore contain a substantial amount of documentation which is required to meet these standards. A good example from the American Institute of Inspector's Standards, requires documentation which describes the main electrical service conductors, including type and condition, a description of the service equipment and grounding system, the amperage and voltage ratings and so on. Besides offering a detailed description of the various components of the subject property, information such as this will often help the buyer supply needed information to their insurance carrier.

After documenting to meet standards, there will typically be language which addresses items or places which were not or could not be inspected and areas where the risk of hidden conditions may exist. While every competent inspector seeks to discover everything possible with every home, the fact remains that not every condition can be identified. It becomes important, therefore, that documentation be included about those things which may not be discovered and why.

Reports will also note recommendations which attempt to direct the client to the most appropriate skilled resource or tradesperson to mitigate documented findings. In the industry this is referred to the process of Detecting, Evaluating and Directing: **Detect** the condition, **Evaluate** the significance of the condition and **Direct** the client to the proper specialist for follow up. Be aware that recommendations are simply that, recommendations. They are not repair requirements, only the opinion of the inspector at the time. Lastly, an inspector's recommendations typically will not go into a lot of technical detail about the specifics of any corrective action as that will be up to the discretion of the tradesperson performing the work.

Following are some of the common categories of inspection findings along with some (abbreviated) examples of what the report language might sound like:

Documentation to Meet Standards: "The main electric service is overhead, three wire aluminum".

Disclaimers and Exclusions: "The wood deck is built close to the ground and cannot be examined from beneath. Be aware hidden conditions may exist".

Conditions With No Recommendations: “There is typical use related wear of the floor. No recommendations”.

Serviceability of Systems of Components: “The water heater appears serviceable where visible and accessible”.

Typical Maintenance: “There are small cracks in the driveway which should be filled and sealed as part of normal maintenance”.

Systems or Components Which Need Repair/Replacement: “The back bedroom window is broken and needs replacement”.

Items Which Can Be Upgraded: “We recommend installing GFCI Outlets in the kitchen as a future safety upgrade”.

Disclosures (Typically Related to Older Homes): “Be aware the stair spindles are more than four inches apart and small children could get their heads trapped”.

Health and Safety Issues: “The furnace has insufficient combustion air which could cause Carbon Monoxide buildup. A heating specialist should be called to evaluate”.

Pest Related Issues: A Structural Pest Inspection is **required** by Washington State on any Real Estate Home Inspection. Look for a separate Pest (WDO) Report with the Home Inspection Report.

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