

# Home inspection adds peace of mind to buying process

By Christine Davis

The caveat "let the buyer beware" should be the battle cry of a home buyer.

If that's the case, then a certified home inspector can be the buyer's field general. Inspectors can detect a home's potential pitfalls and steer a consumer away from a problematic property.

A home inspector is a person with training and experience who examines the physical structure and systems of a house, from the roof to the foundation, and assesses their condition.

The standard home inspector's report will note the condition of the home's heating system; central air conditioning system (temperature permitting); interior plumbing and electrical systems; the roof, attic and visible insulation; walls, ceilings, floors, windows and doors; and the foundation, basement and structural components.

"A thorough inspection will outline any repair issues with a house along with recommendations on how to remedy the

## Resources

### Best Property Inspections

(760) 613-6332

www.bestpropertyinspections.com

### American Society of Home Inspectors

www.ashi.org

(800) 743-2744

### California Real Estate Inspectors Association

www.creia.org

(760) 318-2115

problem," said Rob Paterkiewicz, executive director of the American Society of Home Inspectors, the oldest and largest professional society of home inspectors in the country.

Paterkiewicz said many sellers have a home inspection conducted so that they can address any major issues before the

house goes on sale.

"Home inspections are typically meant to protect the buyer, but in this buyer's market, being competitive can benefit the seller," Paterkiewicz said. "With multiple houses in a neighborhood up for sale at the same time, a pre-inspection helps a home stand out and lets the buyer know that the seller is being up front about the property. The buyer can review a copy of the report to know, in advance, if there are any problems with the house and if they've been corrected or need to be addressed."

Home inspectors also work with homeowners in the process of a major renovation or new construction. An inspector can monitor that work on the project is being completed correctly.

Depending on the size of the home, the national average for a home inspection is \$350. Most inspectors' charges are based on the square footage of a home.

Sean Blasius, owner of Best Property Inspections in Oceanside, charges 14 cents

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Sean Blasius, owner of Best Property Inspections, takes a look at the roof line of this Carlsbad building. Christine Davis

## Inspection

>From C1

per square foot.

"When my client is buying a home or a commercial property, it's up to me to make sure they have all the answers they need before making their decision," Blasius said. "I have a responsibility to accurately report back to the buyer everything I find and refer them to specialists if they need one."

Home inspectors, by nature, are generalists and follow similar standards of practice and a code of ethics in their reporting. The majority are trained to report on the overall condition of a house. Some are considered experts in focused areas such as foundation issues, roofing or mold detection.

California is one of 14 states that does not have licensing requirements for home inspectors. Two membership and accreditation organizations — the American Society of Home Inspectors, or ASHI, and the California Real Estate Inspectors Association, or CREIA — provide training and ongoing education as part of their credential programs.

"A home buyer needs to locate their own home inspector and interview them prior to hiring them to make sure they are reputable, certified and have experience," Blasius said. "A home inspection isn't something to take lightly."

Keith Morgan, an inspector who is the CREIA chairman, said consumers need to understand that their inspector works only for them.

"When hiring an inspector, it's critical to ask to see their résumé, ask them how many homes they've inspected, how many years they've been in the industry and if they are a full-time inspector," Morgan said. "In addition, make sure they follow California guidelines and have both errors and omissions insurance, and general liability insurance."

Morgan said the inspector should provide a client with a full narrative descriptive re-

port, rather than a checklist, in about 24 to 48 hours.

"My clients pick their own home inspector because I need to stay out of that potential conflict-of-interest situation," said Wayne Calhoun, president of Top Agent Realty Group in Vista. "I will provide them with a short list of credible, CREIA-certified inspectors recognized by the San Diego Board of Realtors if they ask, but they can find and hire any inspector they want."

Calhoun said that a Realtor, real estate agent or broker cannot work both sides of a transaction.

"The buyer's interest has to come first at all times," Calhoun said. "I'd rather have my client find out something negative about a house they are interested in buying and not buy it rather than seeing the sale go through on a house with underlying problems."

Calhoun said that in addition to a home inspection report, a buyer can request information from the homeowner's insurance company to discover whether any claims have been made.

"By talking with the insurance company, you can learn if any flooding has occurred, for example," Calhoun said. "It keeps everybody perfectly honest."

Blasius said the structure's foundation and the roof are the most critical components of a home inspection.

"The list of items we investigate and report on is incredibly long and thorough, with emphasis on the foundation and roof," Blasius said. "I look for cracks in the foundation, water damage and movement from the curb to the house and right on into the backyard. With the roof I look for unsealed areas, damaged flashing, gutter problems, broken or cracked tiles and shingles, chimney issues and more. It's my goal to provide the home buyer with peace of mind with my findings."

Christine Davis is freelance writer who lives in Carlsbad.