



Winston-Salem Regional Association of REALTORS®, Inc.

NEW AND RECURRING ISSUES FOR HOME INSPECTORS, WINTER 2014

1. January 2014 was Radon Awareness month, but home buyers are already aware of the need to test radon because REALTORS® are reminding them of this option. More radon testing gets done in real estate transactions than at any other time.
2. More buyers tell us inspectors that their mortgage lender wants to see the home inspection report.
3. Carbon monoxide poisoning still seems like an unlikely source of trouble to many folks. The incompetent response by local authorities and the property owner in the recent hotel deaths in Boone suggests that CO is indeed a “silent and stealthy killer” that does not get enough attention for the harm it can do. We inspectors find too many combustion appliance problems that persist because homeowners are unaware of what’s happening, and there is no CO alarm to tell them that something is amiss.
4. Lots of newer homes have “adhered stone veneer” as decorative siding on the front side. Until the last few years contractors have installed this veneer without a moisture drainage mechanism...or perhaps, have installed a drainage system, but we cannot see it along the bottom course of the stone. So we inspectors are describing this condition as “defective” and explaining that the stone may be allowing moisture to penetrate into the wood framing and sheathing.
5. In the years before the rules for building decks were more elaborately defined in the Building Code, most decks were “under-designed” for the strength loading they needed, especially in the way they were attached to the house. The collapse of an aging deck creates a dramatic news story, but today’s deck is built much stronger. There are still problems with the attachment of the deck causing moisture entry into the wall of the house because the flashing work is wrong. Thus, you will find us paying lots of attention to deck strength, its attachment and flashing, and to the guardrails and their pickets for their sturdiness and protection against falling off or children getting their heads stuck.
6. There has been a proliferation of smoke alarms in homes with newer homes having them in every sleeping room and at every living level (and interconnected). We know from research now that the ionization alarms that are most common are not always sensitive to smoldering fires. We advise purchase of photoelectric alarms, instead, and replacement of any 10 year old alarm because they lose sensitivity.
7. Polybutylene flexible water piping was used in millions of homes, but now has disappeared in favor of PEX plastic piping. Polybutylene had its problems with fittings that cracked, joints that leaked, and piping that deteriorated with high chlorine content in water. Now some PEX brass fittings are corroding and leaking, so you will find us looking carefully for the Zurn brand “Q-PEX” fittings that are causing the concern.
8. Corrugated stainless steel gas piping (CSST) has been found to rupture with lightning striking near a home. We look for that product and note whether or not the gas piping is bonded electrically to the service equipment to give lightning a safer path.
9. The general use of a “house wrap” under the siding (e.g. Tyvek) is a welcome improvement to reduce unwanted air infiltration and protect the wood framing from moisture intrusion, esp. at windows. Often framed door openings don’t get enough careful protection at their threshold level. They need to be flashed with metal or sturdy plastic material so that rain water that gathers on the threshold does not penetrate at the jamb corners into the floor framing beneath the door. Additionally, the door jamb (frame) and its casing trim are extremely vulnerable to rot at the threshold level and need careful sealing & painting to protect them.

Contributed by John Woodmansee, The Home Inspector, Winston-Salem, NC. This is one of the monthly informational articles from the Home Inspection Committee of the W-S Regional Assn. of REALTORS®. We meet on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 1:30 pm and welcome visitors to our discussions.