

HOME INSPECTORS SAVE LIVES

By
Bob Mulloy

Is your home safe? Could there be unknown problems in your home that may cause a fire, that pose a risk of personal injury or that potentially could take a life of a loved one? One profession that often does not receive much recognition is that of a home inspector. For, during the course of a home inspector's daily role as a house detective, numerous potential "safety hazards" are found that may have existed for years without the knowledge of the homeowner.

Hiring a professional home inspector is perhaps the most important step that a consumer should do when purchasing a home. However, even homeowners can find peace-of-mind regarding the safety of their home by asking a home inspector to apply his or her observational skills to disclose potential hazards. You see, home inspectors are trained to understand each system and component in a home, and their interaction in regard to safety. A home inspector utilizes a wealth of knowledge and a protocol to inspect a home from top to bottom and from inside and out. Many homeowners simply do not have the necessary training to recognize potential "safety hazards" that pose a risk of personal injury or property damage.

In my personal experience as a home inspector, I discover numerous problems each year that if not corrected may result in tragedy. People are often shocked to think that they have lived in the home for years and that no one else ever recognized an important safety concern. I sleep very well at night knowing that I did my very best to alert my client, the homeowner or those in authority of potential deadly problems. My fellow home inspectors and I are unsung heroes who "Save Lives!"

The many potential "safety hazards" found by home inspectors who save lives are too numerous to list in entirety, but here is a brief list that you should consider investigating:

- Unsafe handrails
- Unsafe steps
- Unsafe means of egress
- A bedroom that lacks a properly sized egress window
- An "at risk" tree
- Unsafe deck construction
- Low overhead electrical wires
- Frayed exterior electrical service riser cable
- Rusted out electrical meter box
- Unsafe chimney top
- Unsafe chimney flue liner

- **Blocked chimney**
- **Creosote in the chimney**
- **Direct furnace vents too close to the ground**
- **Broken window glass**
- **Windows that won't open for emergency egress**
- **Windows that fall closed when opened**
- **Exterior doors that impair emergency egress**
- **Missing house numbers next to the front door**
- **Loose roofing materials or gutters in danger of falling**
- **Missing or improperly installed photo sensors at garage doors**
- **Ungrounded electrical systems**
- **Water infiltration into the breaker panel**
- **Ungrounded outlets**
- **Outlets with reversed polarity**
- **Non-professional wiring**
- **Aluminum wiring**
- **Signs of overheating electrical wires**
- **Missing or defective GFCI shock protection**
- **Missing AFCI fire protection**
- **Corroded gas piping and unknown leaks**
- **Unplugged openings in the chimney**
- **Unsafe furnace or boiler**
- **Cracked furnace heat exchanger**
- **Rusted out flue pipes from furnace to chimney**
- **Back-drafting of combustion gases into the home**
- **Unsafe primary controls at furnace or boiler**
- **Scalding hot water temperature**
- **Cracked plumbing fixtures**
- **Unsafe dryer venting**
- **Unsafe foundation movement**
- **Unsafe column support**
- **Unsafe floor framing**
- **Missing firestopping**
- **Unsafe roof framing**
- **Improperly constructed stairs**
- **Broken stair treads and unsafe handrails**
- **Unsafe transitions between floor coverings**
- **Combustible forms beneath the fireplace hearth**
- **Unsafe fireplace firebox, damper, smoke shelf or flue**
- **Lack of fire clearance between framing and the chimney**

- Lack of fire clearance between the fireplace or wood stove and combustibles
- Exposed combustible vapor barrier on insulation
- Upper cabinets not properly secured to the wall
- Ranges that lack anti-tip over brackets
- Unsafe flexible gas connectors
- Unsafe doors or door knobs that impair emergency egress
- Windows or window seats that pose a risk of a toddler falling out
- Non-tempered safety glass in hazardous areas
- Porous waste pipes, waste piping leaks and plumbing venting problems
- Coliform bacteria in water supply
- Lead paint hazards, asbestos, elevated radon levels
- Missing or defective smoke or carbon monoxide detectors

Yes, I feel good when I save a life by disclosing a “safety hazard,” but I fear for the safety of many home owners who have never subjected their home to the scrutiny of a professional home inspector. As you can see from the above list, there are countless potential “safety hazards” in homes that may pose a risk of personal injury. You too can save a life by hiring a home inspector to fully evaluate your home and inform you about the need for urgent repairs.

If you are purchasing a home or are a home owner, I highly advise that you seek the services of a professional home inspector. You can be assured of finding a good professional by choosing a home inspector, who is a member of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI). To find a local ASHI member, visit the web site: www.ashi.com.

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