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Your Home Inspections Primer

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Home inspections offer the best possible opportunities for buyers to protect themselves from the often costly and time-consuming surprises of home ownership. Here's a quick guide to types of inspections that are advisable.

General Physical Inspection

This basic inspection is recommended for anyone placing an offer on a home.

What it detects: The major operating functions of a home, including electricity, plumbing, the condition of windows and doors, heating and cooling systems and the overall structural integrity of a property.

Why it's important: Beyond the obvious comfort and design of a home, safety may be compromised and operating costs may sting if any of these areas are not in good working condition.

Price: \$1,000 (depending on the size of the home)

Geological Inspection

The condition of the land surrounding a home is obviously relevant on a hillside or bluff. A property on flat land can also be impacted by geology and warrants a professional's discerning eye.

What it detects: Unknown history of landslides and existing or potential seismic activity or erosion. The composition of the ground under and surround-

ing a home is assessed for its susceptibility to and stability during earthquakes, rains, fires and even nearby new construction.

Why it's important: Issues with the soil under a home or with surrounding properties – such as water flowing or seeping unnoticeably from a neighboring property – can affect the stability of your site and cause cracking and undermining of your home's foundation. Geologists provide a review of drainage, irrigation and landscaping conditions that can damage or improve a property and detract or add to its value.

Price: \$1,200

Main Sewer Line Inspection

Always a good idea, this type of inspection is especially important if no record of a sewer line's history exists.

What it detects: If and when upgrades to the sewer line have ever taken place. In some homes, original clay pipes from decades ago are found in use, which can lead to very expensive but mandatory repairs.

Why it's important: The sewer line can be a homeowner's costliest home repair, however this is one inspection that is commonly overlooked.

Price: \$250

Chimney Inspection

Any chimney positioned in an interior wall of living space should be inspected regardless of the age of the home or number of stories. The best chimney

inspectors are licensed for examinations using a videoscope.

What it detects: Proximity of a wood mantle to the firebox, positioning of the gas valve and unseen cracks in masonry work that could lead to a fire, smoke inhalation or instability during seismic activity.

Why it's important: Homes built prior to new safety codes following the Northridge quake are of highest concern, but newer construction homes can also benefit from a chimney inspection to ensure proper installation or to see if changes to the mantle or hearth were made after City approval.

Price: \$250

Environmental Inspection

Environmental inspections have become more common in recent years.

What it detects: The existence of asbestos and/or mold lurking in a property, as well as allergens and other toxins, such as carbon monoxide and lead.

Why it's important: The time, energy and money involved in remediation can blindside an owner if not discovered in advance, so a thorough environmental inspection is well worth the effort.

Price: \$250

Drainage Inspection

Proper drainage diverts water away from all structures on the property, protecting against foundation damage and site instability. Unfortunately, out-of-date drainage systems are a

common problem throughout the West Los Angeles region.

What it detects: Many times rain, pooling of water on or near a property and even unchecked landscape irrigation can lead to water intrusion and ultimately, damage.

Why it's important: A drainage/foundation inspection can work together with a geological inspection to ensure water on the site is properly diverted and the integrity of the structure is protected and maintained.

Price: \$250

Pool and Spa Inspection

Any property with a pool or spa should be inspected.

What it detects: Pool leaks, outdated drains, faulty child proofing or faulty pool electrical systems.

Why it's important: In addition to avoiding costly repairs from potential water damage, this can help prevent a tragedy.

Price: \$250

Betty-Jo Tilley is a luxury property specialist at Berkshire Hathaway Home Services in Pacific Palisades and can be reached at (310) 429-9833 and bettyjo@bettyjotilley.com. Her insights are intended to inspire strategic thinking and collaborative strategizing between seller and agent and are not intended to provide legal or financial advice. Ms. Tilley's next article for the Post will provide homebuyers with everything they need to know regarding a general home inspection.