

# **Consumer Awareness Guide** **for choosing a home inspector.**

Since home inspection is a relatively small cost start up business, there tends to be a lot of "HGTV Cowboys" so it is critical that you find a professional or it's a waste of your time and money. You will find persons on many different levels of competence, with varying experience, different price ranges and dissimilar tool boxes.

**1. What is his/her background and experience?** Were they cleaning carpets or fitting you for shoes last week?

**2. What certifications do they hold?** One trade association requires a 20 question test and a fee of \$35.00 to become "Certified". Another large association has questions like "Circle the correct spelling of the word receptacle" with 4 choices on their test. The American Society of Home Inspectors (**ASHI**) is the oldest and most respected association with highest technical standard in the industry nation wide. The Florida Association of Building Inspectors (**FABI**) is similar but state based. A Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, Continuing Education requirements and candidate/member list can be found at [www.ashi.org](http://www.ashi.org) or [www.fabi.org](http://www.fabi.org).

**3. Do they have any state or code authority certifications?** Previous contractor experience is a real plus if they are inspecting new construction. The International Code Council (ICC) issues certifications like Building/Electrical/Mechanical/Plumbing Inspector, etc.

**4. How long have they been performing home inspections in Florida?** Issues in Florida can be unique. A home inspector with experience up north may know boilers and ice damming, but may not know about synthetic stucco (EIFS), heat pumps or mold.

**5. How many inspections have they performed?** The more inspection experience one has, the greater probability you have of finding a professional.

**6. How long does the inspection take?** Someone who has done 4000 inspections but has only been in business for 4 years means they are doing 4 inspections per day. In other words, you are getting a one hour inspection.

**7. What kind of tools do they have?** A good inspector will have a lot of tools that help form an educated and reliable opinion not just a guess. It also shows commitment to the profession.

**8. Do you use infrared? If so, are you a Certified Thermographer?** Many entry level cameras have come on the market making it easier for an inspector to purchase one. Someone using a low end camera that doesn't understand building science can provide false and misleading information.

**9. What type of report format do they use?** If you are from out of the area and the inspector uses multi-part carbonless forms that can't be emailed, there may be an issue. There are multiple report programs that anyone can click and check. How custom is your report going to be? Will you receive a digital copy for future reference?

**10. When will you receive the report?** If your closing is quick, you may not be able to wait a day or two or three or...

**11. Do they have a written service agreement outlining their scope of work?** Never enter into an agreement to have something as expensive as a house inspected without having a written contract specifying who's responsible for what.

**12. Do they perform repair work on houses they inspect?** This would be an obvious conflict of interest and illegal in Florida.

**13. Are they familiar with historically defective building products and building practices?** Do they know about FPE, Zinsco, LP,GP, Masonite, polybutelene, EIFS, aluminum wiring, lead based paint, Chinese drywall, etc? Often, inspectors dependent upon check lists fail to include or mention these.

**14. Are they familiar with building science?** In Florida, a good working knowledge of building science is critical. Problems can often be detected before they become problems if the inspector understands building science.

**15. Do they perform a life time safety recall check of major appliances?** There are nearly 200 million recalled appliances. Are any of them in your new house? You should find out and track them!

**16. Does their price reflect the complexity of the inspection?** You will no doubt discover a wide difference in price between home inspection companies. Why is this? Two reasons - complexity of the inspection and qualifications of the inspector. Old, large houses with crawlspaces, pools and problems, cost more than small new homes on slab foundations. Also, when talking quality, you get what you pay for. A brain surgeon with 20 years of experience charges more than an intern. A Mercedes costs more than a Ford. Look at the experience, credentials, time spent at the inspection, individual attention received, the inspection format, and then consider the value of the investment...and the risk. Somewhere there will be a balance. No home inspector will catch 100% of the problems, but some will shed far more light on them than others.

**17. Does the company have business systems in place?** A company with staff, with office administration software, inspection software, contact, distribution and training systems will be in business long after those who schedule their inspections from the attic.