

Choosing your Home Inspector

By Rick Bunzel

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Many businesses in Washington are not regulated and home inspection is one of them. In some ways this helps the consumer and in other ways it can hurt them. Since we are not encumbered in regulation we can charge less but then due to lack of regulation, an inspection can vary greatly in quality and scope.

While most people (almost 80%) have their homes inspected prior to purchase, just who is watching over the inspectors? The two biggest industrial associations are the National Association of Home Inspectors (NAHI) and American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI). These organizations watch over their members, stipulate a standard of practice and handle complaints from consumers. NAHI offers a certification to its members called Certified Real Estate Inspector. To qualify members must have performed at least 250 paid inspections and passed a rigorous exam. ASHI has a similar program. Certifications are one way that the industry can set common quality criteria and assure the public that those who pass meet a superior standard. Unfortunately some organizations are misusing the term. Recently an Internet-oriented organization has started issuing certifications to anyone who pays to join. All the person has to do is take a simple test and they are issued a "certification." To illustrate this point a fictitious person who used the TV character name Arnold Ziffel (you may remember him as the pig in Green Acres) took the test and scored a 98.



How can you be assured that you're getting the best inspector in the area? Since the industry isn't closely regulated, it is important to make sure your home inspector is well trained and insured, especially since you are relying on the home inspector's professional assessment to help decide on the biggest investment of your life. Here are a few tips to help "inspect your inspector:"

- **Choose An Inspector With Top Qualifications:** Make sure your inspector has proper training and experience: training in all aspects of home inspection and experience in residential construction techniques

and associated systems within the home. One measurement of their qualifications are the certification they hold: Home Inspection certification issued by a national organization such as NAHI or ASHI, Mold Certification by Indoor Air Quality Association (IAQ), or Indoor Environmental Standards Organization (IESO). Be sure to interview the inspector and make sure you feel comfortable working with them. After all this is a major purchase your making. Ask if you can attend the inspection. If the inspector discourages you attending, look for another.

- **Ask about a guarantee:** Many home inspectors will stand behind their works with a guarantee or warranty.
- **Be Sure To Obtain A Written Report:** Be sure that your Home Inspector provides a detailed written report, not a hand written checklist with stock responses that is given to you at the end of the inspection. A checklist can be difficult to interpret and to read, and may be void of many of the details and advice you needed. The preferential method is a computer-generated report, which offers a combination of the checklist and a narrative reporting formats, and which includes digital pictures and specific comments of areas of concern.
- **Price:** This is always an area of astonishment for me as many phone inquiries lead with “what is your price?” Price should be the last item on a buyer’s list of qualifiers as the home inspection will normally be less than 2% of the cost of the home purchase yet will get the most scrutiny after the offer is accepted. Do you really want the lowest bidder inspecting your home? Typically home inspection prices will vary based on size and age. What is a \$25 or \$50 difference in price compared to your potential exposure if, due to inexperience, your "low bidder" inspector overlooks an expensive defect?

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Pacific Crest Inspections and holds the CRI as well as a number of other certifications. If you would like to know more about your home go to <http://www.paccrestinspections.com/> If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Pacific Crest Inspections @ 360-588-6956