



Stoffer Inspections'

Insight

Insight from the Area's Leader in Home Inspections

Stoffer
Inspections, L..C.



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Accessible Housing

Building your own home is the dream of a lifetime – but the smart home buyer will make sure the dream home won't be a nightmare as he gets older. The longer a home buyer plans to stay in his newly constructed home, the more important it becomes that he understands the terminology used to describe accessible housing in today's market.

Accessible houses are generally thought of as homes that are easily entered and lived in by someone who is wheelchair-bound. Accommodations such as ground-level entrances, wide doorways and halls and grab bars are most frequently associated with such housing, but other features also contribute to the ease of living for those in wheelchairs. These include wide floor areas to allow for turning the wheelchair, lower light switches and receptacles so they can be reached from the chair, and cabinets with high toe kicks so foot rest may fit easily.

When it comes to building a custom home, accessibility should be a consideration in each step of the building process. The builders and designers should keep in mind that the dwelling should provide ease of living to someone in a wheelchair. Fortunately, as the baby boomers gray, attractive and functional products to meet their accessibility needs are becoming increasingly available.

Even if no member of the household needs total accessibility, a home should be built so



that a person in a wheelchair could comfortably visit the homeowner. This theory – called “visitability” – embraces the concept that every home should be “wheelchair-friendly,” at least to some point. For example, there should be at least one entrance to the home on ground level, as well as a bathroom with a 32 inch doorway on the main floor. Visitability standards are creeping into regulations as this area receives increasingly more attention.

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Tracing Causes of Nail Pops

Q. *Nothing mars the appearance of a freshly-painted or papered wall like nail heads protruding through the sheetrock and paint.*

Why does this happen – even in newer properties?

A. The homeowner should consider these possibilities:

The builder used green lumber, which shrinks as it dries. Because a lot of the lumber used to frame homes is fresh, it is wetter and greener – and gets smaller when it dries.

The builder used undersized framing. This could allow joists to deflect and loosen the nails.

The nails are wrong in size or placement. If the carpenter used the wrong type or sized nail, or if he placed them too far apart, the nails may protrude.

Part of the house has settled. It is possible for one side of the house to settle faster than another, depending on the weight of building material used and furniture and fixtures within. And as the house settles down, the nails may pop out.

There's a highway nearby. 'Nuff said.

The climate allows for frequent freezing and thawing, which may cause some wood shrinkage, resulting in protruding nails.



Checking Out The Kitchen Space

It's the center of the household, the place where we eat our meals, do our homework, discuss our concerns, and plan our vacations. Forget the living room — most families really come alive in the kitchen.

It's no surprise then, that the kitchen is often top priority when a homeowner decides to remodel.

What is desirable in a functional, practical kitchen? Homeowners should look for the following:

- a good working exhaust fan
- adequate water flow in the sink
- solid, unstained floors in the cabinets
- the cabinets themselves should be in good condition with doors and drawers that are easily functional



- properly-running garbage disposal, that has no excessive rusting
- ground fault interrupter protection for all countertop outlets
- no leaks in the pipes beneath the sink
- a dishwasher that drains properly, doesn't leak, and is in good condition inside and out.

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So what's the difference between accessible housing and universal design? Universal design refers to the standard that aims to create homes that can accommodate people of various sizes, shapes and abilities. In addition to the standards set in accessible housing, universal design may include other aspects, such as countertops of varying heights to accommodate cooks of various stature or levers instead of knobs on cabinets or doors (which are easier to manipulate for someone with arthritis or carpal tunnel).

Those considering building their dream home should consider their own aging, and design a home in which they can comfortably – and happily – grow old. Can he imagine living on the first floor alone? Is the floor plan such that someone using a walker or wheelchair can move easily? Is there room on the wall for grab bars?

Sure, this may cost more up front, but it will be considerably less costly than remodeling that “dream home” to accommodate “real life.”

This newsletter contains basic information on the home and general topics of interest. Due to the variations in homes, individual recommendations require a comprehensive evaluation. To reprint any article in this newsletter, please contact our office. © 1996-2005. All rights reserved. (ISMA05)

Stoffer Inspections, L.C. Information

Dave Stoffer provides inspections and is able to explain them to all clients on the most common terms. Stoffer Inspections, L.C. provides 3-D computer generated narrative reports that are both quick and comprehensive. My service also provides digital photography services for complete record keeping. Each Home Inspection includes an evaluation of roofing, electrical, heating and a/c, built in appliances that stay with the home, plumbing and visual structure. Radon screening and septic system inspections are available.

Dave is a certified member of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) #11750, a charter member and former board member of the Great Plains Chapter of ASHI, and a member of the Pro ASHI Chapter. To obtain certification, members must perform a minimum of 250 home inspections and pass a series of written tests that cover both mechanical and structural aspects of a home. Once certified, members must maintain at least 20 hours of continuing education each year. All of these requirements ensure that your clients will receive a through, experienced, ethical and knowledgeable home inspection.



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