

Consumer Awareness Guide

**By Ralph Nicosia,
Professional Property Inspector**

Hi! This is Ralph Nicosia. I'm grateful for the opportunity to provide you with information about home inspections and help you choose a home inspection company.

During the last 16 years as a inspector, I have served as President of the American Society of Construction Analysts (ASCA) and as Vice-President and Education Director of the Texas Association of Real Estate Inspectors (TAREI). And in that time, I've learned that home inspections are the subject of much confusion. In fact, people have so many misconceptions about home inspections that I decided to offer this **consumer education message** so when you select a home inspection company, you can make an informed, intelligent decision.

In just a moment, I'll share with you seven costly misconceptions about home inspections. Plus I'll offer four recommendations. And I'll give you five questions you should ask a home inspection company before you let them inspect one of **the largest investments you will ever make.**

Now here's

Misconception #1: You should wait as long as possible before getting your home inspection.

Waiting until the last minute to get your home inspection leaves you in a position of not having the information that you need to make an informed decision. Also your contract will likely have specific dates in it that if you don't respond in a timely manner then you will loose the opportunity to cancel your contract on a house and still receive your earnest money back.

One of the problems is that if the home inspection turns up something significant then a specialist is generally required to help you understand the depth of the problem.

You need to schedule the inspection as quickly as possible and have it done as soon as possible. There are a couple of other things that will help with this that I will mention in a later section.

Misconception #2: You don't need a home inspection if you are getting a home warranty.

As you probably know, there are very few perfect homes. A home inspector is going to inspect for any major problems that you need to be aware of concerning the structure of the home and the mechanical, electrical and plumbing aspects of the home. Home

inspections on a regular basis turn up items that are simply too expensive to fix and may not be fixable. If you move in and are relying on the home warranty you may end up with items that the warranty doesn't even begin to cover.

In addition, as you may know, if someone tells you not to worry - "*that the warranty will take care of any problems with the home*" this should be a red flag. Home warranties are not designed and will not cover pre-existing conditions.

One of the best reasons to have an inspection is to help prove that a problem that shows up later is not pre-existing.

Misconception #3: One inspection is as good as another inspection. One inspector is as good as another inspector. One inspection company is as good as another inspection company.

No. You will want to make sure the inspector or inspection company has the experience to take care of you. Many people think of home inspection companies as a commodity. This can be a major mistake and leave you holding the bag or in this case a house with problems that are expensive to fix or unable to be repaired.

Again I will give you some questions to ask here in a minute that will help you avoid this dilemma when calling companies to choose your inspector.

No question, the best direction to go is with an inspector who has been around for years, that continually trains, and earns additional certifications.

Misconception #4: The company that offers the lowest price is the company you should hire.

Maybe – but not always. Here are two important points to consider.

The company that offers the cheapest price is generally showing you a couple of things. One that they are new and or that they don't really know what their cost is, meaning they are likely not to be in business for long. If you are only concerned about one or two items you can probably have a specialist come out and look at it for less than the inspection, or you can even have a friend or relative look at it and give you their expert advice.

On the other hand, if you want a thorough inspection that gives you a detailed, narrative computerized report that includes color digital photos – if you want to know the status of all the major systems in the home – then you need to hire a company that has been doing it for years and understands that they are working for you and no one else. You are their main concern and making sure that you understand the condition of the house is their first priority.

Because hiring someone to do a home inspection for you is something that most homebuyers only do once every 3 –5 years you are likely not even going to realize if you received a poor inspection until it is too late. So remember that the price you pay may not give you the information that you are hoping for with many inspectors.

As in all businesses and professions, the home inspection industry has its share of bad apples. I take no pleasure in telling you this, but some are unethical – and, sadly, a few are dishonest. By their deep concern for others besides you, they may leave you hanging and missing vital information that you should have to make a complete and informed decision.

Then you'll find other home inspection companies – professionals like me who work hard to earn your trust and respect.

As a way of improving our profession, I've dedicated my business to educating the public. The only way you can make an intelligent decision is to have all the facts you need.

Misconception #5: If you are buying a brand new home you don't need an inspection.

Simply not true. Many people believe that if they are buying a new home that everything is new and going to work perfectly.

Nothing could be further from the truth. While buying a new house is great because no one has lived in it and everything is brand new, from the carpet to the roof, this does not mean everything was put together right.

In fact, over my many years of experience I have found that we find some of the strangest problems and situations in brand new homes.

In one case I discovered that the main sewer drain line from the house had been collapsed under the weight of the tractor that was used to grade the front yard. The house partially flooded during the inspection.

Another time the builder somehow forgot to have any insulation put in the attic. That would have been a costly electric bill.

And just one last example, was the home that both of the standing showers had been installed with no shower pans. Water literally ran down the exterior walls when the showers were tested. Since this was on the outside of the home, it may have been months or years before it was discovered.

Of course the builder in each case went back in and fixed these items. And I am sure he would have done so even after you move in, but don't risk it. My recommendation is that you don't put yourself or your family through having to chase the builder down that may or may not really care and fix the problem in a timely manner while your family has to work around the problem.

Misconception #6: FHA or VA has inspected the house and/or the appraisal will cover me.

Absolutely not true. While having FHA or VA do an inspection on your home is useful and they are likely to call out a number of concerns, this is far from a complete inspection. In fact the bottom line is that these inspectors are working to protect FHA or VA and not you.

On top of that these inspections are only about 30 minutes to an hour long at best and usually 30 minutes is pushing it. A real inspection that has your best interest at heart is going to take significantly longer. It is unusual for an inspection to take less than 2 hours on smaller homes and many inspections have been known to take longer depending on the size of the home.

The thought of the appraisal taking the place of the inspection scares the appraiser as much as it should scare you. The appraisal is designed to determine the value of the home for the mortgage company. The mortgage company simply wants to know if what they are loaning on the house is reasonable. It is not designed at all to pick up the condition of the house, even though some times if there is a major concern the appraiser will bring it to everyone's attention. However this is hardly an inspection and every appraiser will be glad to tell you so. Unfortunately you rarely see the appraiser and you are lucky if you receive his report until you go to closing.

Misconception #7: That the home inspection is a guarantee or warranty.

No. If you ask just about any inspection company they will tell you that their inspection is only good for the day and time of the inspection. That anything can and something usually will likely break at some point after the inspection.

Unfortunately, most inspectors use this like a crutch and use it to cover their mistakes. If the company is a multi-inspector firm and you have a problem and the inspector doesn't answer your concerns satisfactorily then you have the ability to go to his supervisor, who hopefully can offer a non-biased opinion of the situation.

When deciding on the inspection company to inspect your new home, I offer these four recommendations.

Recommendation #1: Make a commitment to yourself to hire a company that has your best interest at heart. Choose a company that even though they may be a little higher will be honest and straight forward with you and will give you a report with color digital photos and that gives you a complete list of concerns broken down by systems in the house.

Recommendation #2: Hire a company or an inspector that has been in the inspection business for many years. Hire an inspector that if something goes wrong, he will make sure your best interest is taken care of, because it is in their best interest as well to protect their reputation.

Recommendation #3: Ask questions. The way you learn about a company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are some of the questions I suggest you ask:

1. How long has your company been in business? Anything less than 5 years is a major point against the company or inspector, 5-10 years is just Ok, anything above 10 years is getting better, **but above 15 years is GREAT!!!**
2. Do you offer a detailed, narrative report with color digital photos?
3. Will you be able to perform all the inspections that I need? Structural Inspection? Termite Inspection? Swimming Pool Inspection? Septic Inspection? Etc. Hopefully the answer is yes.
4. Does the inspector offer a warranty on their work. Anything but yes, go on.
5. Is the inspector a Platinum member of ethicalinspectors.com? Again, hopefully the answer is yes.

Recommendation #4: Once you're satisfied that you're working with an honest, competent professional company, invite them to help you make one of the largest financial decisions that you will ever make and be comfortable with the fact that they have your best interest at heart.

By following these four recommendations, you'll gain all the information you need to make an informed, intelligent decision. If you want a quick, cheap home inspection, many companies in the phone book can help you. Or you can have a friend or relative come with you or you can even do the inspection yourself.

But if you want your home inspection to be complete and detailed – removing doubt and giving you peace of mind – then I invite you to call our company.

We have professionals answering the phones to answer your questions and to be able to give you an exact quote right over the phone. They also work earlier and later than most to make sure we are there for you.

So in addition to dedicating my business to consumer education, I do one more thing as well. I guarantee my work. That's right. I fully guarantee every home inspection that I do. If you aren't happy with my work, you will not be charged. In addition, I will pay for another inspector of your choice to perform another inspection. **There are no gimmicks. No tricks.**

That is our **200% NO RISK GUARANTEE** to you. General Conditions/Limitations: (1) Buyer must be at the property during the entire inspection; and (2) Cost of the second inspection must not exceed 10% of our inspection cost.

As a matter fact, add this question to the list. **Question #6** is **“Do you guarantee your work?”** Not many companies offer a 200% guarantee – and it's important that you have this information before you make your decision.

What could be more fair and professional?

Well, thank you very much for taking the time to read this Guide. I hope you found this consumer message helpful. If you have questions or comments – or if you'd like to schedule us for your home inspection, please call us at the office at 713-542-5684 or 409-737-9872. My cell number is 713-254-3491.

On behalf of RAN Real Estate Inspections, LLC – I thank you for your kind attention.

Ralph Nicosia,
Professional Property Inspector, License # 2775
Wood Destroying Insect (termite) Inspector
Certified Roofing Consultant
Certified Moisture Analyst
Building Consultant
Supra Key Maintained (HAR and GAR)

AFFILIATIONS

Texas Real Estate Commission (TREC)
Texas Structural Pest Control Board (Certified Applicator)
Texas Association of Real Estate Inspectors (TAREI, Advanced Inspector Member 1998-2000 Director, 1999-2000 Vice President)
American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI, Certified Inspector)
American Society of Construction Analyst (ASCA, 1994 Director, 1995 President)
Houston Association of Real Estate Inspectors (HAREI, founding member)
International Association of Electrical Inspectors (IAEI)
International Code Council (ICC)
National Association of REALTORS® (NAR)
Texas Association of REALTORS® (TAR)
Houston Association of REALTORS® (HAR)
Galveston Association of REALTORS® (GAR)
Women's Council of REALTORS® (WCR)
Better Business Bureau (BBB)

United States Marine Corps (Honorable Discharge, Sergeant)