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Professional Home Inspector
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WHAT TO EXPECT BEFORE WE INSPECT: HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR AN INSPECTION

By

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So, you are ready to sell your home. You have contacted a real estate professional, cleaned the house, and made it ready to show to potential buyers. Have you given any consideration to what happens after you get the acceptable offer? Most home buyers will request a professional home inspection. Although you have lived in the house without any major problems, a professional home inspector may notice conditions you were unaware of. This can lead to complications and issues between you, the seller, and the potential buyers. The following information is not intended to replace a pre-listing inspection but as an aid to home sellers to anticipate and correct some of the more common conditions typically noted in inspection reports.

ROOFS

The best way to inspect your roof is to walk on its surface. If you do not feel you can safely walk on the roof, we recommend inspecting the roof from several vantage points with a ladder and binoculars. Check to make sure the surface, valleys, gutters, and scuppers (drainage troughs for flat roofs) are clean. Ensure that vegetation is trimmed and not growing over or coming in contact with the roof surface.

Asphalt **shingles** are the most commonly used roof surfaces on pitched roofs. The most common defect with relatively young roofs is missing shingles. In many cases this is due to high winds.

Tiled roofs will often have cracked or broken tiles. Although this is typical, if the general tile condition is poor it may be a point of contention for potential buyers. We do not recommend walking on or attempting to replace tiles yourself. They are often brittle and you may end up breaking more than you replace. Tile replacement is best left to the professionals. The easiest method to inspect your tile roof is with a ladder from the eaves or back away from the house and use binoculars.

In Las Cruces many houses have **flat roofs**. There are several different styles and installation procedures for flat roofs but they all need to be watertight and drain effectively. Look for any lifted seams or ridges. Ridges in the roof are usually a sign of poor installation techniques. We recommend a qualified technician perform the repairs because, if they are not done properly, they will eventually split. Next, inspect the flashings and the condition of the sealant around them. If the sealant is cracking, splitting, or separating from the roof or a penetration, it will need to be re-applied.

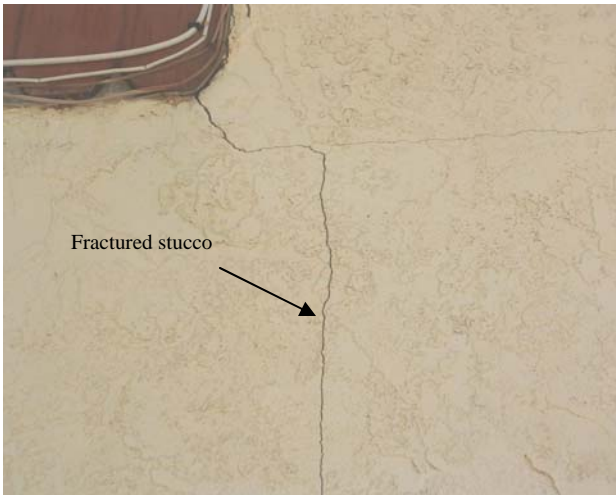


If you have a flat roof, visually inspect the **parapet walls**. The stucco at the top and sides should not have any fractures which are common points of moisture intrusion.



EXTERIOR

The wall cladding on the majority of houses in Las Cruces is stucco. Stucco is an extremely resilient siding but is subject to expansion and contraction with the temperature changes. Check your exterior **walls** for fractures. Inspect the perimeter of **windows** and **doors** to see if the stucco has pulled away from the frames. Also inspect the wall **penetrations** such as where your TV cable or gas line enters the house. Openings can allow water and pests an easy entry to the interior of the walls. These can be easily corrected with stucco patch or caulking. Next, ensure the ground around the residence will direct water away from the house and that vegetation, particularly trees and vines are not growing on or touching the wall cladding.



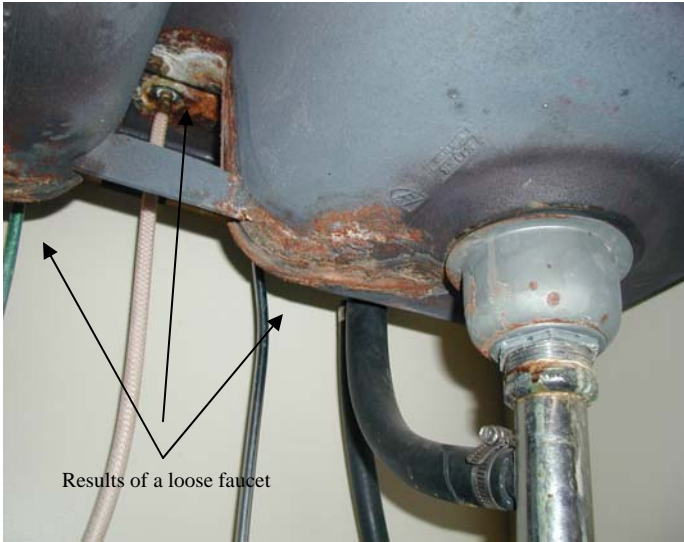
Many of the stucco homes built since the late eighties utilized a **synthetic stucco**. To determine if your stucco cladding is synthetic, knock on it. If it has a hollow sound it is synthetic. If it feels like you are knocking on concrete then you have standard stucco. Synthetic stucco is more resilient than standard stucco and resists fractures caused by expansion and contraction. It is also waterproof, it doesn't breathe. That means if moisture does get behind the synthetic stucco it cannot escape back to the exterior. It is important to monitor and seal fractures and open penetrations to reduce the potential for moisture intrusion. If you notice small fractures, you can cover them with an elastomeric paint that will fill the small voids and the elastomeric paint can expand and contract with the synthetic stucco.

ELECTRICAL

The number one issue is defective **GFI receptacles**. These can be tested by simply pushing the test button located on the receptacle. Make sure all **lights** have functioning bulbs in them. If a light does not respond it will be included in the report with a statement indicating it may be a burnt out bulb but it should be demonstrated by the owners to the satisfaction of the potential buyer. Finally, check the attachment of exterior lights. Porch lights are subjected to the weather and high winds jeopardizing the integrity of the attachment. If any of these conditions are present and you are not familiar with your electrical system we strongly recommend you retain the services of a qualified technician to complete these repairs.

PLUMBING

Check all of your fixtures to ensure they are secure. Kitchen and bathroom **faucets** are in daily use and become loose. This can allow splashing water to work its way under the fixture and drain onto the bottom of the sink under the cabinet. Another common condition is a faucet that leaks around the stem. These leaks are often slow and little consideration is given to them if they are noticed. An indication of a slow leaking stem valve is mineral buildup around the base of the fixture itself. Turn the faucet on and inspect the stem while water is running. Some stem valves can be repaired with a new o-ring. After the leak is repaired clean the mineral buildup with a scale remover such as CLR. Also check the connections under the sink to ensure they are not encrusted with minerals.



Loose toilets are easy to identify and correct. Straddle the toilet and try to gently rock it with the inside of your knees. If it moves, it will need to be tightened.

Tile showers and tubs are often missing grout in the joints or have caulking that is deteriorating.

Another condition often noted in showers and tubs is **slow drainage**. This is typically due to hair clogging the drain. Fill up the tub and ensure that it will drain at a reasonable rate. If you think it is slow to drain, then you are probably correct. Ensure the drain is clear of any hair or debris.

HEATING AND COOLING

If you have a furnace or central heating and cooling, ensure that the **filter** and the return air compartment are clean. Filters should be replaced every 2-3 months and many manufacturers recommend once a month.

Evaporative coolers are almost always rusted and dirty. They also provide a great environment for the growth of mold and other bioaerosols. Inspect the interior of your cooler for dirt, rust, and any mold like substance. These components can be cleaned and coated with a sealant that will significantly increase the life of the unit. Also inspect the pad(s). The pads for single pad coolers such as MasterCool units can be expensive (\$100 or more).

INTERIOR

Although most inspectors do not comment on cosmetic conditions, industry standards dictate an inspector must report on all **water stains**. If you have had a leak repaired, follow through and repaint the stains on the interior. This is best accomplished with a stain sealer followed by the interior house paint.

Now inspect your **windows** for cracks and ensure they will open and close. Many single hung windows that have not been in frequent use will have a defective sash balancer. This is the mechanism in the side of the window that allows the window to stay open at the height determined by the user. Window professionals can normally repair these for a reasonable cost.

This guide is not meant as a substitute for a professional home inspection. Professional inspectors are trained and have encountered these conditions in many homes. By following these tips, you will eliminate typical items noted by professional home inspectors. If you are not comfortable performing these inspections, consider a pre-listing inspection. Not only will a professional home inspection identify areas of concern it can reduce your liability and provide you with a professional sellers disclosure statement. You will then be able to list and sell your house with the piece of mind you deserve.

A business card for Cunningham Services, LLC, Professional Home Inspections. The card is blue and white. It features the company name and logo at the top, followed by the name and title of the inspector, Lee Cunningham. Below that is the address: PO Box 1329, Mesilla Park, NM 88047. The phone number 505-640-0411 is prominently displayed at the bottom. On the right side of the card, there is a stylized illustration of a house with a garage.

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