

Ten Questions You Should Ask Your Home Inspector

by Gary Lewis

1 Are you a member of any professional organizations?

The Georgia Association of Home Inspectors (GAHI) has the most rigorous membership requirements of any professional inspectors association in the United States. Numerous groups, associations and societies exist that require only payment of the membership fee and possibly an initiation fee while others require that the inspector attend the organization's training.

2 What CODE certifications do you have?

The most qualified inspectors should have the International Code Council® (ICC) Combination Residential Inspector Certification as a minimum. However, some inspectors obtain only the residential building certification (omitting the plumbing, electrical, and mechanical sections) and then pass themselves off as code certified. This certification is issued by an independent third party organization and is recognized as requiring significant professional knowledge in residential construction codes to obtain a passing score. The International Residential Code is used in all or part of forty – eight states. The word "certified" does not necessarily indicate CODE certified.

A CODE certified home inspector's credentials can be verified at ICC's website: <http://www.iccsafe.org/e/certsearch.html>. This site allows you to search by the inspector's last name.

3 Where did you receive your certifications?

The International Code Council (ICC) is the model code organization that provides the requisite certifications for inspectors in Georgia.

4 How much continuing education do you participate in each year?

The minimum should be 20 hours per year in classes designed to further enhance the home inspector's knowledge of new codes and building practices.

5 How long have you been performing home inspections?

While it is useful to gauge the experience level of an inspector, this question is not as important as verifying the qualifications and certifications stated in points 1 through 3 above. An untrained home inspector who has done thousands of inspections that do not conform to a stringent Standard of Practice may not be equivalent to several hundred inspections that are performed properly by a well trained CODE certified inspector.

at least 2-1/2 to 3 hours for a small home while larger or significantly older homes can take much longer. Some factors which may affect the length of the inspection include the age of the home, size, general condition (i.e. distressed properties will require more time), and the presence of a basement or crawlspace.

7 Do I need to be present at the home inspection?

Most inspectors will want you to participate in the inspection if you have time. Being present for the inspection will give you a better understanding of the condition of the home. At a minimum it is beneficial to be present for at least the last hour.

report or one that is provided after they return to their office. Beware of a very brief report (i.e. one to two pages) or one that consists of only checklists. Some reports may be extensive, but contain a considerable amount of generic information that may not be specific to your home. Many inspectors provide digital photographs as part of their report.

9 Can I call you if I have additional questions after the inspection is completed?

The answer should be YES!!! Most good inspectors rely on referrals from satisfied clients for future business. Answering follow-up questions is a great way for them to stay in touch with clients.

10 How much will my inspection cost?

This is a question best posed at the end of your interview with the home inspector. The inspector may ask specific questions about the number of heating and cooling systems, or whether or not the home has crawlspace or basement. These factors may affect total cost. Generally, home inspections cost between \$350 and \$400 for a basic three bedroom, two bath home built on a slab. Larger, more complicated homes and homes more than twenty years old may be more expensive to inspect. Bargain priced inspections may result in rushed and incomplete inspections. Important elements such as crawl spaces, attics and electric panels might be missed or omitted to save time. Generally, veteran inspectors will quote higher prices as they have more experience and may often need more time to perform a thorough inspection. More knowledge does not necessarily result in quicker inspections. ■

◆
◆
“The most qualified inspectors should have the International Code Council® (ICC) Combination Residential Inspector Certification as a minimum.”
◆
◆

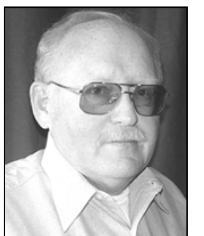
6 How long should my inspection take?

The inspector may ask you for some information about the home you are purchasing before answering this question. Generally, inspections take

8 What type of report do you provide?

Some inspectors may provide a handwritten on-site checklist/summary report with comments. Others might offer an on-site, computer-generated

Gary Lewis is a home inspector with multiple GA certifications, and 25 years experience in maintenance, construction & repair. Please visit his website at www.prospecthi.com for a complete list of his qualifications, or call his office at 770-386-1322.



The above article is provided to help investors in selecting a qualified home inspector as a professional member of their investment team. The best time to meet an inspector at your property is before you buy, not when you believe you are finished and they arrive to inspect it for a potential buyer. A thorough inspection is an important part of your due diligence.

In future columns, Gary will answer inspection questions from investors. Remember, the only ridiculous question is the one you don't ask. If it is a question in your mind, it is also likely to be one for others. From time to time, as space permits, he will also provide information regarding code issues that are commonly found in investment properties. Email your questions to Gary at gllewis@bell-south.net.