



Questions & Answers About

Structural Pest Control Inspections

What is a pest inspection?

Also called a termite inspection, this visual inspection is conducted by a state-licensed professional hired to look for signs of infestation or damage to a structure by wood-destroying pests. Pest inspectors look for:

- Wood-destroying pests, such as termites, carpenter ants, rot fungus and wood-infesting beetles.
- Evidence of pest activity, such as damaged wood, dead insects and termite tubes.
- Conducive conditions for pests, such as standing water, earth-to-wood contact and plumbing leaks

The inspector will visually inspect accessible areas inside a home (including crawlspaces) and the exterior of the property. In areas where drywood termites are prevalent and in houses where there are no subfloor crawlspaces, the attic is also inspected. The average termite inspection takes about an hour. Findings are recorded on a pest control inspection report.

When is a pest control inspection report required?

State law does not require a pest control inspection report before the sale of property. However, many mortgage lenders do, to protect their investment. Companies are not responsible for conditions which develop or become visible after the inspection date. For that reason, it is advisable for a buyer to get an inspection report as close as possible to the close of escrow. If you are selling a home, you can save time by having your property inspected for pest damage just before you plan to put it on the market and making sure any problems are fixed. Some buyers include a termite contingency in their purchase contract, which allows them to withdraw from the transaction in the event of extreme damage.

How do I know which pest control inspector to use?

Structural pest control companies and some home inspectors are licensed by the Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB) to do these inspections. Ask your friends, neighbors or a real estate agent to refer a company, or look in the yellow pages. Call a few companies and compare their fees. Ask for references and take time to check them carefully. Ask about the experience level of those who will perform the inspection. Request that the most experienced employees do your job.

The SPCB cannot recommend a specific company but once you have selected a company, you can

contact SPCB to ensure it is licensed and for a history of any complaints. You can also get this information from the SPCB Web site, www.pestboard.ca.gov.

What rights does a home buyer have to see reports on pest inspections and treatment?

When a company is hired to do a pest inspection, it is accountable to both the buyer and seller, no matter who pays for the inspection. The company must give the person who ordered the inspection a copy of the report within 10 working days. The home seller or real estate agent usually delivers copies of the inspection reports to the buyer. You can also get copies from the escrow company. If you have questions about the reports, contact the company that made the inspection or that performed the work.

How can I tell if a house has been inspected before or if any work has been completed?

Every time a licensed company makes an inspection for wood-destroying pests or organisms, it must post a tag in the attic, subarea or garage. The tag contains the firm's name and the inspection date. A similar tag must be posted next to the inspection tag when the company completes any work. Besides the firm's name and completion date, this tag must show any pesticides used. The structural pest control company must also note on an inspection report the location of the inspection tag as well as the presence of any other inspection tag or completion tag that is less than two years old. These reports are kept by the pest control company for three years.

You can also search the SPCB Web site to see if a home has been inspected in the last two years. You will need to fill out a form or e-mail a request to SPCB to get a copy of the report.

What information must be in the inspection report?

California law requires that the report include any wood-destroying insects (such as termites or wood-boring beetles) or fungus. It should also note the resulting structural damage visible and accessible on the date of inspection. Also identified on the report are conditions likely to lead to future wood-destroying pest infestations such as excessive moisture, earth-to-wood contact and faulty grade levels.

A diagram on the inspection report must show every part of the house checked for signs of infestation or infections. Outbuildings are usually not inspected unless requested. It is important that the inspector

Enforcement/Complaints

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Mission Statement



The Structural Pest

Control Board protects

consumers by

regulating the structural

pest control industry

to promote the health,

safety, and general

welfare of the public.



understands what structures you want inspected and for you to make sure these areas were inspected. The report must state which areas were inspected and which were not because of inaccessibility. The inspector should also note recommendations for treatment or repair.

If you did not order the report, be sure to check if it is a limited or a complete report before accepting it. For real estate transfers, a complete structural pest inspection report is preferred.

What areas are considered to be inaccessible on the inspection report?

Inaccessible areas are those that cannot be inspected without opening the structure or removing the objects blocking the opening. The most common are attics or subareas without adequate crawl space, slab foundations without openings to bathroom plumbing, floors covered by carpeting, and walls covered by cabinets or shelving.

The pest inspector must list all inaccessible areas and the reasons they were not inspected. Careful attention should be paid to these areas since there may be structural pest problems which cannot be detected without further inspection. The report will recommend whether further inspection is appropriate.

Do all recommendations listed in an inspection report have to be completed before a home is sold?

There is no law requiring that recommendations listed on a report be completed. However, many financial institutions require that both the inspection and all recommendations be finished before escrow can close.

The lender usually requires certification from a pest control company that the structure is free of infestation or infection. Some financial institutions may be interested only in determining if recommendations have been completed correcting active infestations and infections and the resulting damage (Section 1 items). Other lenders (such as FHA and VA) may require that conditions that could lead to an infestation or infection (Section 2 items) also be corrected. A consumer may request a report from the pest control company that designates each item as a Section 1, Section 2, or unknown for further inspection. Whether the buyer or seller pays for the work depends on the sales contract. The buyer should be aware of any recommendations which have not been completed before escrow closes.

When they work on a structure, pest control companies must complete a notice describing

work they completed and work they did not. Review all reports carefully for indications that work has not been performed. The certification can be found on an inspection report, completion notice or cover letter. The certification may include disclosures in situations where all recommended work has not been completed. The inspection report and the completion notice should be delivered within 10 working days to the person who ordered the report and to the property owner or the agent.

If two inspection reports are filed on the same structure within a reasonably close period, should they be nearly identical?

Not necessarily. There are three parts of an inspection report: findings, recommendations and estimates.

Findings should be the same, no matter which company performs the inspection, although minor differences are not uncommon. Any major differences -- such as one company reporting an active infestation and another does not -- should be brought to the attention of both companies. If their explanations are not satisfactory, you can contact the SPCB for help.

Recommendations made by structural pest control companies can differ since there are different ways to repair structural pest damage or correct conditions.

Estimates may vary to correct each of the problems or conditions identified by the inspection report.

How long is an inspection report valid?

Under the law, inspection reports and completion notices are valid for two years. This also means all complaints against licensees must be filed with SPCB within two years after the date of the inspection or completion of recommendations.

Are companies required to certify their inspection or work?

A structural pest control company must certify its inspection or work if requested by the person ordering the report. The company will certify that either:

- 1) The inspection disclosed no evidence of active infestation or infection by wood-destroying pests in the visible and accessible areas;
- 2) The inspection disclosed active infestation or infection in visible and accessible areas that have been corrected; or
- 3) The property is free of pest infestation or infection in the visible and accessible

areas, except for specified areas. When a structure is fumigated, the fumigation company will issue a certification of fumigation within five days after completing the fumigation.

Every completion report should be compared with a copy of the inspection report to find out if there are any conditions which have not been corrected or if secondary, substandard corrections have been performed.

Do I have to hire the same company that did the inspection to do the pest control work?

No, if they choose, consumers can hire a different company to do the pest control work. However, pest control companies will not certify chemical treatments performed by other pest control companies. The pest control company can reinspect items called out on its original report within four months of the inspection. The reinspection should be completed within 10 working days after it was ordered. If it has been more than four months since the original report, a full inspection of the structures on the first report must be done and a new inspection report issued. The report and any contract must detail the guarantees for work performed and the terms of that guarantee.

What if I find that a pest inspector overlooked some major problem?

First, contact the inspector and explain your concern. Many will correct the problem immediately. If the problem isn't resolved to your satisfaction, contact the SPCB. An investigator will work with you and the inspector to find a solution.

Questions:

Call the SPCB:
916-561 8708— in Sacramento
1-800-737-8188— outside Sacramento

You can e-mail the SPCB at pestboard@dca.ca.gov or write to:
Structural Pest Control Board
2005 Evergreen Street, Suite 1500
Sacramento, CA 95815

The Structural Pest Control Board licenses and regulates pest management professionals engaged in the business of structural pest control to ensure that licensees meet minimum qualifications and levels of competency to provide safe and effective services to the public. SPCB staff address complaints filed by consumers through mediation and enforcement of the Structural Pest Control Act.