

New Year, New Homes

Wow, can you believe that it's 2025? Happy New Year Folks. With the beginning of the new year, let's take a minute and talk about new construction. When having a new home built or embarking on an addition or major renovation having periodic inspections is a smart thing to do. An extra set of eyes on the project is always a good thing. This is especially true if you are building a home in another area, or you have a client who is. It's not that you can't trust the builder but won't you want to have an advocate for your interests.

The first inspection to schedule is for the foundation and crawlspace. Most homes built here are constructed on perimeter foundations, but some have slab foundations, eliminating the crawlspace. For this inspection the emphasis is going to be on such things as the actual concrete foundation and the installation of proper insulation and vapor barriers. With our climate here in Idaho ranging from subfreezing temps in the winter to scorching 100° temps in the summer, insulating the crawlspace will help to regulate the temperature, preventing moisture, mold or other potentials for deterioration. Additionally, just like insulation in the attic and walls, this will help to efficiently heat and cool the home without wasting energy and money.

Next up is to inspect the framing of the structure. This inspection will focus on ensuring that the structural members of the house are installed completely and properly. One common defect that we find is when joist hangers, or other metal connectors are not installed properly or completely nailed off. This is easy to overlook when you are building but it is very important. Without complete nailing, the attachment of the framing members is compromised and the structure could be unsound. Another defect we find regularly also has to do with improper nailing, sheathing. After the walls are framed, the house is clad in a layer of plywood or other type of paneling to give the structure stability and a substrate for the actual finished surface be it stucco or some type of siding. If the carpenter wasn't quite accurate with the nail gun, the sheathing will not be properly attached, and the structural benefits will be lost.

After the house or addition is framed and the walls are up is when the mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) lines are run throughout the home. This is called "roughing in". When the MEP contractors start to run their wires, pipes and ducts they often need to notch or bore holes in the framing. There are very specific rules to how this is done and protections for those pipes and wires that are important to safeguard the MEP lines. Places where the holes are bored close to the surface of the studs or joists need to have shields so that pipes and wires are not punctured by nails and screws from the drywall or hanging pictures in the future.

Pre-drywall inspections review everything up through the MEP rough ins and the insulation in the walls. Hey, it's the last time you get to make any changes before everything gets closed up and hidden from view. Last-minute addition of electrical outlets or changes to plumbing locations are possible here and very expensive after the drywall goes up.

After the installation of the drywall, or sometimes in conjunction, it's time to inspect the roof and the attic. The attic is so much more to the house than just a place to store the Christmas decorations you just took down. Proper insulation and ventilation of the attic space is vital to the health of the home. The insulation helps to ensure comfort inside the home as well as the effective operations of the HVAC system. Proper attic ventilation allows the house to "breathe" reducing the potential development of mold. Additionally, regulating the attic temperature will inhibit formation of ice dams which as we discussed back in August lead to icicles forming on your gutters and damaging the roof. Let's not overlook inspecting the roof itself. Flashings and proper installation of the roofing materials are your first line of defense when it comes to keeping the water out.

With all of the previous inspections now we are ready for the final inspection. We sometimes call this the "blue tape" inspection because placement of little pieces of blue tape tells the builder where there are areas of finishes that need attention. Let's face it, no matter how good the builder is, there are going to be little blemishes that you will find, and you want them fixed right? This is the opportunity to have the builder come in and do the touchup prior to accepting the home and moving in. It's a whole lot easier to get them repaired before you move in the furniture and fill the cabinets.

Having these periodic inspections throughout the construction of your home or major renovation will give you peace of mind that your home is the highest quality. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about the inspection process or any other aspect of home construction and we would be happy to discuss it with you.

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