

Home Inspections Involving Mold

QUESTION: Can I rely on, and feel protected by, an unlicensed (uncertified) home inspector looking into my mold infestation and related moisture issues in my home?

ANSWER:

NO. Performing a high quality, competent home inspection is something, in my opinion, only a few home inspectors can do. While I do know a few good home inspectors, most of the home inspection reports I come across are seriously deficient, if not in form, in substance.

I believe any home inspector that professes they can do a competent analysis of mold infestation, its type and degree, or, a professional level IAQ (Indoor Air Quality) assessment, is misrepresenting their abilities. Experience is a most critical factor, but the quality of experience is even more critical. I have handled many construction defects cases, since 1992, a number of which have involved IAQ and/or Mold issues, and have found that making an initial diagnosis that there is in fact a Mold/IAQ problem is only a first step, and is one that a competent home inspector may be qualified to make. The second appropriate step a good Home Inspector should take is providing you, the client, a referral to an established, professional Mold Inspection and/or Abatement Company. Only such a reputable, state sanctioned/certified/licensed company can be relied upon to properly diagnose the type and degree of the problem, and then effectively remediate the problem.

The cost of the 'proper course of action' is not cheap. A thorough, professional (not a Home Inspection Person/Company) inspection and assessment, by a reputable firm starts at around \$1,250.00 to \$1,500.00, for initial findings. When concealed cavities need to be opened and further examined, the cost goes up accordingly. The cost for the abatement process can range from \$2,500 (for an isolated, small area problem), to well over \$75,000, or more, depending on the extent and type of problem, for a residential home of 3,000 square feet.

My background is as a licensed Architect and General Contractor, in the State of California, for over 22 years; as a designer and builder of single family and multi-family residential homes, restaurants, supermarkets, offices, office buildings and department stores, for over 30 years; as a qualified expert witness – for both architectural and construction related defects, for over 19 years; and, as an inspector of single and multi-family housing, and commercial properties for over 17 years. With that level of experience, and after having performed a number of IAQ samplings, and mold sampling and testing programs, I fully understand how difficult it is to follow the proper testing regimen, and from that, provide an accurate analysis of the problem(s). I only feel qualified to make an initial assessment as to whether the Mold/IAQ/Moisture issue at hand, and its remediation, can be adequately addressed in my Home Inspection report, or if in fact, the professional, certified specialists need to be called in.

The short answer is – NO – you should absolutely NOT feel 'protected' with an unlicensed home inspector looking into moisture and mold issues. It has taken me over twenty years to be able to fairly accurately, and correctly assess a moisture issue, and often it takes many hours of investigation to get to the actual cause(s). My advice? If you have a serious moisture related mold issue, spend some time doing research on the professionals available that specializes in Mold/IAQ problems, and retain their services if you want to rely on the analysis and required remediation program presented to you. Although a Home Inspector myself, the last place I would look when seeking answers for a serious mold/moisture issue, would be for a 'Home Inspector' to make the proper call.

Note to the average Home Inspector: Waving some petri dishes, air sampling cartridges, or other related paraphernalia in front of a client may impress them, but if you are 'just the typical home inspector' you are not doing yourself, or your client, justice.