

Sometimes in the course reviewing of a wood destroying insect/organism (WDI/WDO) inspection report for a real estate transaction and comparing it to a home, signs of WDI/WDO or damage due to WDI/WDO show up that the customer feels that should have been seen or noted during the inspection process.

Over my twenty-nine years (29) in the urban pest control field and ten years (10) as a pest control investigator, I have learned some valuable information that I would like to share with you on how to handle and more importantly how to avoid such situations.

WDI/WDO Reports

1. ***If you are the buyer of the home or structure, hire your own inspection company.***
Most potential new homeowners do this, but some trying to save money and have the sellers hire the inspection company to do this. There are several problems with this arrangement.
 - A. If the sellers pay for the inspection, usually all the paper work goes to the sellers and you get second hand knowledge of the inspection. Sometimes you dont get to see the paper work until closing.
 - B. I have seen in some instances when the seller has hired a WDI/WDO inspection company who found active or previous WDI/WDO infestation; and then the homeowner repaired or covered the WDI/WDO problem without notifying the buyer
 - C. In rare occurrences, I have seen the seller hire a WDI/WDO inspection company, which in turn found WDI/WDO problems; the seller then repaired or hid the damage; and the homeowner hired a different termite inspection company, which of course did not find any problems. The buyer would then be shown the report that no WDI/WDO problems.

By hiring your own WDI/WDO inspection company, all the paper work should come to you and you will have first hand knowledge of what the inspection showed.

2. ***Always be there for the inspection***

Being at the inspection gives you up close and personal information of what's inspected and what's found. Stick to the inspector like a wet blanket but dont get in their way. Do not be afraid to ask the inspector questions. They should be happy to answer your questions, plus if you hired them, they are working for you. Make sure that you are able to be there for the whole inspection. Inspections take time, and if your WDI/WDO inspector is also the real estate inspector, it might take the whole day to do the inspection.

Most inspectors will sit down with you after the inspection to go over in complete detail what was found. Make sure that the inspector does this for you after the inspection while things are still fresh on the inspector's mind. Don't wait a day or two for this report. Make sure that you understand everything the inspector is telling you about his findings. Some people are afraid to ask a question because they might feel stupid for not knowing the information. Ask yourself, is it better to find out and understand the problem and solve the problem before I purchase the home, or wait and understand the problem after the purchase of the home but its to late to solve the problem.

If a WDI/WDO problem is found, make sure you know who is to pay for the treatment and how the treatment is going to take care of the problem.

In most situations if a WDI/WDO (in this case lets make it termites) problem is found, the seller is the one that takes care of this problem. This is where major communication problems and assumptions come into play. When the seller purchases the termite treatment, the seller gets all the paper work since they are the purchaser of the treatment. The sellers might ask for the minimal treatment, which is a spot treatment of where the termites are found (a spot treatment is as any treatment which concerns a limited, defined area less than ten (10) linear or square feet that is intended to protect a specific location or spot)

Often, there are adjacent areas susceptible to termite infestation, which are not treated. Once the spot treatment is complete, a certificate/warranty (most of the time warranty's are not given on spot treatments) is issued to show that the termite problem addressed. This is where the problem or misunderstanding often occurs. Since there is something that shows the termite problem was treated, the buyer usually assumes that the whole home or structure has been treated and has a warranty for the termites. This could be a serious mistake especially if the buyer gets this information after they purchased the home. For some reason, if termites appear elsewhere in the home, the termite control company is blamed for the invasion. The termite control company was only doing what they were hired to do. It is up to you, the buyer to know what type of termite treatment was performed and the terms of the warranty before closing on the home.

3. Hiring another WDI/WDO inspector to get a second opinion.

If you feel that the WDI/WDO inspector you originally hired did a poor job or felt like they missed or overlooked something on their report, you can get a second or even a third opinion. If you do this you need to be careful, most of the pest control industry is made up of hard working, honest individuals, but as with all industries, there are a few bad apples that would say anything to get your business. Be suspicious if the inspector uses phrases such as: " These termites or these damages

have been here for years”; “There is major damage/structural damage”; “You need to get this taken care right away”; “This company is trying to rip you off/ doesn’t know what there doing”; or “I cant believe the house is still standing/the walls/floors haven’t collapsed.” First no one can tell you how old termite damage is, **NO ONE**. Second, it is rare if a WDI/WDO inspector is a structural engineer and can tell if the home has structural damage much less if the walls and ceiling are going to collapse. These are just scare tactics to use their services. In fact, after these statements is usually when they try to get you to buy their services because “there is no time to loose/ it must be taken care of immediately”. I would suggest that you hire a third party consultant that is not in the pest control treatment or home inspection business. If your second or third opinion shows a problem with the original inspectors report, **do not panic!!** Below are some suggestions on how to handle the situation.

Suggestions on what to do if you feel WDI/WDO inspector missed infestation and/or damage.

1. *Contact and discuss the problem with the WDI/WDO inspection company.*

Asking the inspector to come back out and discuss what was found can solve most problems. A lot of times the two parties can come to an agreement on what is to be done. If the problem can’t be solved or there is a difference of opinion of what is to be done and who is at fault then you can go to the next steps.

2. *Do not disturb or remove anything*

WDI/WDO real-estate inspections are **based on conditions that could have been seen at the time of inspection**. If you remove, repair or disturb the area in question, you have altered the evidence what the consultant could have used to make a determination if something was missed or overlooked. If you happen to come across the area in question while in the process of repair or remodeling, stop what you are doing immediately and contact a third party consultant to come and look at the problem ASAP.

If time is a factor and you must do repairs, either photographs and/or videotape in detail everything before and after proceeding with the remodeling.

Make sure you get panoramic and close-up shots

3. *Have all relevant documentation*

Make sure you have the following documentation.

- a.) Copy of the WDI/WDO inspection report
- b.) Copy of the home inspection report
- c.) Copy of the seller disclosure documents

4. *Time is critical/hire a third party consultant*

The longer you wait for an investigation to be performed the harder it is for the consultant to determine if something was missed or overlooked.

5. *Discuss consultants finding with Inspection Company.*

If the consultant finds that there were errors in the report and if WDI/WDO were missed during the inspection, go over this information with the original inspector to see if you can come to some agreement on how to settle the issue.

6. *Legal Council*

If discussing the problem with the inspection company fails to solve the problem, then the last resort may be securing legal council. If you pursue this through the courts, you must have complete and detailed documentation to be successful. Going to legal council should be done only if all avenues to solve the problems have failed.