

BEWARE THESE REPAIRS WHEN BUYING A HOUSE

It is not uncommon for a resale house to need some repairs and improvements. Many are minor and therefore shouldn't affect your decision to purchase. Others, however, can be so troublesome and expensive that it is best to not buy the house. Realistically, many repairs simply justify negotiating a price reduction to compensate for the repairs. How can you know which repairs are likely to cause you the most problems and expense? Would you recognize all or most of the things that could be wrong with a house?

This article will identify the major repairs that can cause buyers a lot of money and headaches. When you make an offer on a house, it is a good idea to make that offer conditional on a home inspection. Then, have a qualified home inspector check the house. Your inspector will provide you with a detailed report and cost estimates for any needed work. In no particular order, here are the top repairs to beware:

1. Foundation

Foundation problems are of great concern because the condition of the foundation can affect the entire house. Damp or leaking basements can cause damage in the basement itself and render it unusable. Even worse, a faulty foundation can compromise the entire structure. If the foundation is unsound, the house itself can shift. Foundation damp-proofing and repairs can be very expensive. It can even include the removal and replacement of patios, decks, etc. due to excavation.

2. Roofing

A roof (including flashing, eavestroughs, downspouts and chimney) is also a common trouble spot. A roof that is left to leak can cause rot and damage to the roof structure itself and to the ceiling below. Depending on its condition and the kind of roofing material, this is also one of the more expensive home repairs.

3. Plumbing

Plumbing problems that involve pipe replacement can be difficult and expensive because many pipes are inaccessible inside walls, floors, and underground. Except for those that are visible in an unfinished basement, most pipes can only be reached by tearing open walls and other structures. This adds the cost of wall repair to the cost of plumbing repair.

4. Electrical

Some older houses can have inadequate electrical services. Typical upgrades include replacing the service panel, increasing the service amperage, or re-wiring the house. Of these, re-wiring is the most involved and expensive because most wiring runs through walls. The labor to remove the old wiring and run new wiring can be many thousands of dollars for an average house.

5. Heating and Cooling

A replacement furnace can set you back an average of \$3,000.00 to \$5,000.00. Air conditioning can add another \$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00. And a conversion to install a forced air system in a house that previously did not have ductwork can be as much as \$15,000.00.

6. Insulation

Older houses can lack adequate insulation by today's standards. Upgrading the insulation can be expensive because of the labor required to get it into all of the nooks and cavities in walls, ceilings, floor sills, etc. An even more problematic and expensive situation is that of UFFI (urea formaldehyde foam insulation). This product, once popular in the 1970's as a retro-fit insulation, has since been found to cause some health problems. Removing it is difficult and expensive. Many jurisdictions require that the seller must reveal whether or not the house is - or has ever been - insulated with UFFI. Therefore, even if you remove it, the residue is still considered to be hazardous and therefore must be revealed to future buyers.

7. Termites

If left unchecked, termites can damage so much wood in a house that it can actually create structural instability. In addition to the cost to exterminate the pests, there is preventive work. This can include siding replacement, deck renovations and other work to get wood away from the ground and out of the termite's reach. If damage is extensive, it might also be necessary to repair and replace sills, joists, studs, beams, and other wooden structures. This can be very expensive.

8. Private sewer and water systems

Private sewer and water systems might need replacement or updating. The most common is to remove and replace the septic tank. To complicate matters, some municipalities change septic tank and drainage bed codes as building development creates higher density. The existing tank might be unacceptable to current codes. Thus, you might have to move the new tank to another location on the property (a job that might involve digging up previously unaffected trees and structures) or even pay to hook up to a municipal sewer and water supply.

9. Swimming pools

A pool that is damaged, neglected, or has reached the end of its life span, can mean thousands of dollars to repair or replace. Even if you decide to buy a house with the intent of getting rid of the pool, be aware that it can cost \$2,000.00 or more to have it filled and the pump equipment removed (depending on the size and accessibility of the pool).