

What Will Inspectors Look For in My Region of the Country?



Example

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First Last

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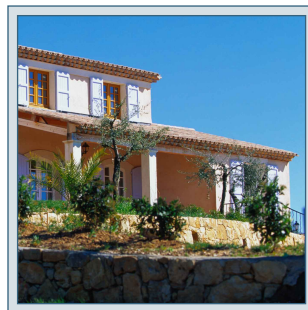
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A home's structure and its systems are greatly impacted by temperature and moisture levels. Structural elements of a property – foundations, roofs, and walls – age at different rates depending on the climate you live in. A home's vulnerability to insects, mold, poisonous gases, as well as to natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes can vary widely from one region of the country to the next. Geography plays a role, too: if you live on water, on a hilltop or cliff, or in a valley, your property may have been subjected to different impacts over time. If the hot sun, balmy ocean breezes, high humidity, or long winters characterize your region, it will also affect your home.



If you're moving from one climate of the country to another, be sure to discuss with your real estate agent the different types of issues common to homes and the building materials in your area. Here's a brief review of issues you can research throughout different regions of the United States:

Natural disaster or environmental hazards

Earthquakes: If you're seeking a home in a faultline state such as California, Oregon, or Washington, ask if a home has been seismically retrofitted or whether supplemental earthquake insurance is available. Ask about its structure.

Flooding: Depending on where your home is located – in a valley, or alongside a creek or river – inspectors will examine the foundation and walls for any signs of water penetration and damage.

Hurricanes: If you're looking at homes in a hurricane zone, inspectors can help assess whether the property is built with the latest wind-resistant building techniques or materials and assess whether a home's prior damage was properly repaired.

Moist and damp climates

If you're considering moving to a climate with heavier than average rains, pay attention to moisture penetration in attics, basements, and crawlspaces or walls. Such climates have also seen trouble with misuse of the synthetic stucco known as EIFS, so if you're looking at a home sided with this material be sure to pay close attention to an inspector's findings about siding, windows, balconies, and doors. Wet climates also attract wood-destroying carpenter ants, and climates that experience tropical hot weather may also be more susceptible to some breeds of termites than others.

Cold or mountain climates

If you're buying a home in a colder climate, be sure to pay careful attention to an inspector's findings with the home's heating system and to secondary heat sources such as fireplaces and wood stoves. If these systems haven't been closely maintained, the home may be at an increased risk for carbon monoxide emissions, which can be unhealthy or even fatal. A carbon monoxide detector, if not already present in the home, is a wise investment. Find out if the home has a carbon monoxide monitor or consider asking for a carbon monoxide test. You'll also want to pay attention to the home's energy efficiency and insulation levels to assure that, if you buy the home, your heating bills won't soar. Also pay close attention to the roof's condition, especially if snow and ice are a regular part of life in your new climate.

Desert climates

In desert climates, especially in the Southwest, the beating sun can age roofs and siding at a faster rate than elsewhere in the country. In addition, certain forms of toxic mold (coccidioidomycosis, or Valley Fever) are exclusive to the Southwest, found mostly in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Utah; ask your real estate agent or inspection company if mold screenings are available in your market. Radon gas emissions are slightly more common in the dry climates of states bordering Mexico or the Gulf of Mexico, meaning you may want to test for radon gas or ask if the seller has reports from recent tests they have conducted. Pay close attention to what inspectors discover about cooling systems and ventilation, and take note of the home's plumbing and lawn irrigation systems. If the home has a deck, especially a wood deck, examine whether it has been properly treated over the years or is showing signs of cracking or rot.

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