

## **New Construction Punch List**

When buying a new property the buyer is at the mercy of the developer or builder. Just prior to the closing, the buyer is allowed to walk through the property with a representative of the builder/developer and compile a punch list. This list encompasses the items that the buyer feels are not completed to his or her satisfaction. When the punch list is drawn up, both the buyer and the representative sign their names, and the buyer is promised that these items will be completed in a reasonable time frame.

This reasonable time may be tomorrow, next week, next year, or never. Most representatives are very nice during the punch list inspection, because you have not closed on the sale, and they do not have their money yet. You as a buyer are anxious to close on your residence and believe that the items that were written on the punch list will be completed. The representative is likely to say that after you move in, if you find any additional items, just call and they will take care of them.

After the closing, the shoe is on the other foot. They have your money, and you have moved in. Most developers will complete the items written on the punch list, but they will complete these items on their own time frame, not yours. Many have trouble completing the punch list items without many phone calls from the buyer, letters from the buyer's attorney and, sometimes, a lawsuit is needed to get the items completed. Most developers and builders will not repair or replace damaged cabinets/vanities, cracked or broken tile, damaged walls and trim, broken or scratched glass or mirrors, spots or burns on carpet, scratches or chips on bathtubs or lavatories, along with other items that can be attributed to moving in or damaging them after you move in.

What can you do?

Why should a buyer be subject to all the aggravations of trying to get a good punch list compiled and completed? Most buyers are aware that they will have to rely on the developer for the next year to correct defective materials and workmanship and, therefore, they do not want to get into a shouting match with the representative. Most buyers also do not have the expertise to compile a good punch list.

However, a professional home inspector is not out to win a popularity contest, they do have the expertise to compile and complete an accurate punch list, and you are their client. A complete and accurate punch list should contain all and any items related to the lot or site where the property is located. If there is a garage, it should be inspected just as the home is inspected, and all items related should be listed. The complete exterior of the home including lighting, outdoor outlets, porches, siding, caulking, to name a few, should be inspected.

The interior inspection should contain all heating, cooling, exhaust, plumbing, electrical etc. A professional home inspector will check to see if the floor and wall tile are installed in a good, workmanlike manner. He will remove the cover from the electric panel box to see if all the

circuit breakers are wired and labeled. He will inspect the kitchen cabinets, vanities and tops for nicks, scratches, and defects. He will, in fact, inspect every item visible within the home and site, and list all items found not to be installed in a good workmanlike manner. If you compile your own list, you should do the same and make sure all items are repaired or replaced prior to closing.

The above is only a brief list of what should take place during a punch list inspection. The average inspection time varies, but a normal time is two to three hours at an average cost of \$300.00 to \$500.00, and should be done approximately five to seven business days prior to the closing date. The buyer is then given the opportunity to make a final walk-through a few hours prior to the actual closing in order to see if the items have been completed. In the event there are many outstanding items not completed, there is still time to hold money in escrow.

You, as a buyer, cannot see why a professional home inspector is viewed by many developers as their worst nightmare. I know I have done my job when at the end of an inspection, I say to the representative, "I'm glad I have met you," and he replies, "I wish I could say the same about you."

The following are some items I have found during the course of punch list inspections. (Keep in mind, some of my punch lists have contained as many as 365 items).

- Forced air furnaces installed without a humidifier.
- Central air-conditioned homes without compressors.
- Humidifiers installed without water lines attached.
- Appliances installed without water lines or gas lines.
- Dryers installed without exterior vents.
- Electrical panel boxes containing many unwired circuits.
- Kitchen grease traps installed in inaccessible areas.
- Furnaces and hot water heaters installed in inaccessible areas.
- Bathrooms without either a window or an exhaust fan.
- Whirlpool tubs installed without an access panel or without the pump being wired.
- Hardwood floor finishes installed over dirt and food debris from the workers.
- Heating ducts full of construction debris and workman's food litter.
- Carpet and floor covering installed over loose underlayment.
- Stain and varnish applied on unsanded wood.
- Drywall seams and joints not taped or prepared prior to painting.
- Horizontal and vertical drywall joints not true or properly sanded.
- Doors not properly installed so as to stay in an open position.
- Windows without the proper counterweight balance so as to stay in an open position.
- Floor tile installed so poorly that if walked barefoot, injury could occur.
- Bathroom wall tile installed so poorly that if slippage occurred in the tub or shower, cuts to your body from tile edges would be possible.
- Windows double glazing storm panels installed in freshly painted window sash.

- Casement windows installed so poorly that the screen panels won't fit the out of square openings.
- Aluminum and vinyl siding nailed too tight, not allowing for expansion.
- Aluminum and vinyl siding nailed too loose that it can be blown off by high winds.
- Trim pieces missing at the gables and eaves.
- Masonry work not properly cleaned or excessive mortar removed.
- Roll roofing and shingles installed without metal flashings.
- Downspouts installed without being grouted to the drain tile.
- Steps and walkways over two feet below grade without hand rails or guard rails.
- Painted trim and siding that was not primed prior to painting.
- Windows and doors not weatherstripped or caulked.