

## **Home Maintenance Quiz Answers:**

**Roof 40%:** Roofs are often neglected when owning a home. Frequently roof access is not easy or pleasant and requires a ladder. Some people are afraid of heights. We often see flashing concerns on roofs. Roofing is a dangerous line of work that requires skill. Water, believe it or not, can defy gravity given the proper conditions. Roofers often hire seasonal employees who may or may not pay attention to details such as weather conditions at the time of installation. For example: Many roofs use asphalt/composition shingles for weather resistance and tar paper for moisture resistance. Depending on when a roof is built, frost concerns may affect the tar paper/shingles and manifest into problems when the roof warms up. Many roof concerns are undetectable from the ground. Other items to consider which are not easily seen: Was the nail gun set to the correct pressure? Are there adequate nails holding the shingles in place? Are the nails long enough, or are they working themselves back out? Metal roofs, wood shingle, rubber, etc. each have unique qualities and maintenance requirements.

**Gutters & Downspouts 34%:** Many homes are missing gutters, or have gutters and downspouts with no extensions to route the water 5-10 feet from the structure. The extensions are crucial in diverting the concentrated water flow away from the structure. Concentrated water flow can cause erosion of the ground supporting the foundation or seep into basements and crawlspaces.

**Exterior Maintenance 93%:** Weather patterns typically come from the west and north so these two sides of the structure usually are in need of more maintenance. Houses that face the north or west typically are in better condition since people pay more attention to the front of the house as opposed to the rear or sides. Loose siding, improperly supported gas or electric utilities, improperly wired outlets, siding in contact with the ground, improperly sealed walkways and driveways, clogged vents, peeling paint, decay at wood end grains, are some of the common maintenance items we notice.

**Fire Hazards 40%:** We often find non-functioning smoke detectors. People often store combustibles or caustic chemicals around heating units in utility rooms. Older wood fireplaces often have a buildup of creosote and/or cracked, broken firebox bricks. All these can contribute to dangerous fire potential(s). Depending on chimney location, interior or exterior, the chances of a fire from excessive creosote buildup and proximity to combustibles can increase or decrease.

**Attic & Basement 59%:** Attics often lack insulation and proper ventilation. Depending on the type of roof sheathing, ventilation may or may not be as much of a concern. Bath, kitchen, and dryer ventilation should vent directly to the exterior. Insulation maintenance items typically include needing to add more insulation, insulation compacted (reducing R-factor) or not evenly distributed. In older homes with knob and tube wiring, the wiring is designed as an "open air" heat dissipating system. In other words, don't cover it up. When attics have insulation added that covers knob and tube wiring, the heat dissipating element is reduced or eliminate. Without being able to dissipate heat, the knob and tube wiring has the potential for starting a fire. Knob and tube wiring should never be covered in insulation.

Basements often have inadequately supported pipes and mechanicals. Depending on outside factors, some areas may have experienced water damage and/or decay. Floor support systems are sometimes modified (cut) to make room for home mechanical systems which may contribute to future sagging/structural issues. In new homes, some equipment is not fully or properly installed resulting in the potential for operational or safety concerns.

**Crawl Space 60%:** Crawlspace, like attics, are not the easiest or the most desirable places to visit. It is important to insulate and provide a vapor barrier to increase energy efficiency and reduce long-term maintenance issues. As a general rule, a crawl space should be ventilated to the interior basement only. Depending on soil type and exterior maintenance, moisture may also be an issue.

**Wet Basement 51%:** This is a problem that results commonly when improper grade slope and/or gutter arrangement are present. Proper grade slope is considered the primary way to keep moisture away from the foundation wall and protect the wall from freeze-thaw heave. The type of native soil and foundation wall material are also factors in the positive and/or negative effects of proper grade slope.

**Termites 23%:** Termites are more common in certain areas of La Crosse. Termites need moisture. We see interior basement evidence of termites in the area around exterior water spigots, frequently. They can be found anywhere, though. How well the native soil holds water will also play a factor in the potential for termite damage.

**Electrical System 53%:** We inspect the interior of the electric panel, wiring in the basement, visible attic wiring and outside wiring. We also test a representative number of outlets throughout the home interior, exterior and garage. Reverse polarity, over servicing at the main panel (even on brand new homes) and missing or defective GFCI outlets are common issues. There is no state required licensing of electricians in Wisconsin.

**Plumbing 28%:** Cross connections at water softeners, toilets and drains are common. Leaking sink drains, loosely installed toilets, and excessive rust formations on cast iron pipe(s) are also common wear and tear items. Improperly supported drain and pressure piping is also a concern.

**Heating & Air Conditioning Systems 42%:** We recommend annual furnace/air conditioning inspections and, with our report, provide a 10% discount on an inspection/cleaning. Heating/air conditioning systems should be serviced annually. People often forget to change filters which results in reduced airflow through the furnace heat exchanger and increases the possibility for overheating/cracking the unit, and causing additional wear and tear on the blower motor. Moisture leakage is common on high efficiency models along with improperly connected or supported flues.

**Hot Water System 24%:** These systems include boilers and radiator issues. Depending on the type of system, air can infiltrate the system resulting in noisy piping. Other factors include leaking pumps, poorly supported supply-return piping, air in the system, lack of even heat, etc.

**New Home Construction Problems 15-41%:** Depending on many factors such as but not limited to; subcontractors, seasonal employees, schedule conflicts, and time of the year that construction took place, there are any number of concerns that may arise. We have seen glass patio doors installed backwards, no insulation in the attic and living room outlets that only worked if the kitchen florescent light was turned on. Ironically new homes, which you expect to be perfect, are harder to inspect.

Sources: The Complete Book of Home Inspection 2nd Edition Norman Becker, P.E. 1993  
ConsumerReports.org Housewrecked: Serious hidden defects plague many newer homes. Here's how to avoid trouble.  
National Assoc of Home Builders: Construction Quality Survey