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Do you need a pre-sale inspection?

Before you ready your home for market, it's a good idea to really get to know it by obtaining a professional home inspection. A general home inspection is a lot like taking a car to a mechanic to check it out before you drive it off the lot. With a house, the investment is much larger, making the inspection even more prudent. The buyer is generally obligated to contract most inspections so he or she knows the home's physical condition before plunking down a deposit and signing off on a commitment to buy. The seller, however, also has a stake in knowing the home's condition.

In many states, laws dictate that you disclose known defects that could affect the value or salability of your home. There are rules for disclosing the general condition of the home as well as seismic hazards, geological hazards, environmental hazards, such as lead, asbestos and radon, structural pest damage, and a host of others.

Certainly, what you don't know can't make you liable, but it can hurt you. Why take a chance that the deal will fall through because you or the buyer discovers something you overlooked?

A general home inspection will let you know well in advance what the buyer may attempt to negotiate, and it will help you spot items inside and outside that need your attention in your effort to make your home as marketable as possible in a competitive market.

As the seller, you won't be surprised by a buyer's inspection that could turn up thousands of dollars of necessary repairs - and at the very least delay the sale. If the report is clean, on the other hand, it can be a positive sales tool to reassure prospective buyers of the home's condition. Some real estate experts say the \$200 to \$500 or so spent for a general home inspection every once in a while is money well invested to keep you on top of maintenance that your untrained eye may not notice. Local laws, your home's condition, it's location, type, age and other factors will dictate what additional inspections are in order.

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