

Sewer Pipe Inspection

June 5, 2019

In accordance with the NJ home inspection standards of practice 13:40-15.16 (h) the inspector “shall” 1.i. “Interior water supply and distribution systems including functional water flow and **functional drainage**, excluding wells, well pumps, well water sampling...” (yellow highlighting is my emphasis).

During the home inspection testing the “functional water flow” is fairly straight forward. I go to a bathroom, usually on the 2nd floor if the house has one. Step 1 is that I turn on the shower, shine my flashlight at the stream of water and photograph it. Step 2 is I turn on the sink or sinks in the bathroom and simultaneously observe the shower’s water flow and for my records, photograph it too. Ideally the shower should remain at the same, steady flow that was initially observed in Step 1. Then I flush the toilet as Step 3 while observing the shower’s flow and again, photograph the flow. Below are a few photos from recently inspected houses.



Step 1.



Step 2.



Step 3.

The flow remains consistent and is documented as such. Fairly straight forward. However, checking the, “Functional drainage” is not as objective. When I enter a bathroom or kitchen, I usually start turning on the faucets; Sinks, tubs, etc. Once I had a lower level shower back up because the main waste water drainage line to the street must have been clogged. In my report, I tell clients that the functional drainage was evaluated but IT IS NOT A substitute or simulation of daily life. It can’t be expected that in a two, hour inspection I can simulate the drain (Waste water) conditions of a family of five for example. Five showers a day, laundry, washing dishes, etc. The home inspection report is absolutely not a guarantee and specifically when it comes to this particular area. Therefore, it’s always recommended that a video analysis of the waste pipe be done.

I attended a seminar recently hosted by the NJ Association of Licensed, Professional Home Inspectors (NJ ALPHI). I have been a member since 2013 and almost always attend their seminars. At the latest seminar I learned, from the speaker, that “80%” of the waste pipe laterals have some type of blockage. The, “Lateral” is the waste pipe from the house to the sewer authority’s main sewer line in the street. The lateral is the responsibility of the homeowner. Just like your refrigerator, if it stops working, you pay to have it fixed or replaced. The difference is that the cost to dig up the yard, sidewalk, cut into the street, etc. can be very, very expensive. For a home buyer, the last thing you want is this large expense. To help buyers address this, as a home inspector I recommended that they find a, “Roto rooter type” service provider and have the video analysis of the interior of the sewer line done. This is really the only way, as a home buyer, that you can rest easy that there aren’t any waste pipe drainage issues. For a slow draining sink there’s always a drain cleaner like Drain’O. However, for the lateral, there aren’t many options and the cost to repair is very expensive.

So Regal Home Inspections, LLC now includes a specific vendor in our reports to address this. The cost is reasonable and I believe it will give the new home owner some peace-of-mind. We will urge our clients to add the services of a video analysis of the waste lateral from Pipe Works Home Services, Inc. Not only is the video analysis price reasonable (\$275.00) they have solutions if there is damage to the waste pipe or blockages in the waste pipe. They have the technology to repair a waste pipe WITHOUT digging up the yard. Pipe Works recommends that you schedule the video for the same time as the home inspection.

Please visit www.pwsnj.com or call them on 973-635-3111 for more information.