



Termite Inspection Protocol

Slide #1

The following presentation is really designed as an introduction to doing a thorough termite inspection and at the same time giving you hints into areas where you can find yourself in a legal proceeding.

Slide #2

One would think that equipment selection would be really obvious for a termite (WDO) inspector but I can't tell you the number of times that I go out either with an experienced inspector or when training an inspector and I find them without essential equipment.



Being sure that you have everything you need and being sure that the equipment is functional, can be the difference between an inspection that you miss something that results in a lawsuit or you find something that increases the bid.

Rubber Mallet; good for exterior fascia and stucco to tease out termite droppings

Drywall Saw blade; you can use many tools to do the same thing here, bottom-line; you need something to do a proper blade test in the sub-area at the sill plate and porch connection.

Roller Tape and tape with weight; it cracks me up to see inspectors walking off a house, I can't imagine what the homeowner must think about the exactness of my quote. The weighted tape helps on tall structures or those next to an embankment for calculating proper cubic footage.

Slide #3

What else? Don't forget, wax marker for indicating where you found problems, safety glasses, gloves and your clipboard.

Let's review the equipment briefly....

Coveralls; it's a surprise to see an inspector crawl an attic or sub-area with their jeans on. Much of what we'll talk about relates to being comfortable and therefore allowing an inspector to do a good inspection.

Respirator/Dust mask; I know many inspectors don't wear anything for dust but again if it allows you to stay in a silty sub-area an extra few minutes then you might just find something that you might have missed that another inspector finds and you lose the job.

Flashlight; does anything really need to be said except, don't be cheap get something that is really bright and don't forget extra batteries!

Knee pads; this should be standard issue but rarely is, and again it relates to comfort.

Probes; you need several types, small handheld for probing near your hand, mid-sized on extension poles for deck overhangs, and first story eaves, and the very long extension poles for 2nd story eaves and areas on hills that are difficult to reach.



Slide #4

"Gather Information" and it means just that. Stop and ask questions, age of structure, previous work performed, what they are seeing. Have them show you where they have noticed evidence..

This is important information but it also improves the rapport between you and the client.



Slide #5

This is a great time to explain what you are about to do, ask where the attic access (es) are. You should be sure to talk about what a visual inspection really means and what are the limitations of the inspection, honesty and ethics can be appreciated by everyone. This will save you issues after the fact.

Finally, invite them to come along. Yes, I do mean it. At least for the areas they can safely go. There is nothing that builds trust then to actually show the owner what you find and maybe even share some advice to avoid future problems.

Slide #6

Starting the inspection, always start inside the structure. You're clean and already there!

Always start at the same place, move either left or right of the front door. The most common reason for lawsuits is because inspectors don't have a routine and then they miss things. Stick to a routine.

Look down, which most inspectors do well; look up, which most inspectors forget to do. Create a zone, perhaps six (6) feet wide and examine each zone.



Slide #7 and #8

Interior inspections include everything that you have access to from the inside excluding the attic and sub-area. It does include; plumbing areas anywhere, decks off second story structures, window and door frames, tub access and shower testing. Be careful to note unusual construction. "Sleeper" construction can be a fungus' best friend especially when plumbing is running through it. This is defined as studs over slab construction and is often used in remodels. But lack of ventilation allows moisture to build up and create problems.



Slide #9

Testing the shower; depending on which state you are doing your inspection in will depend on what the regulations are regarding how to test the shower. However, the following is the law in California and it makes sense to follow it as an industry standard in most states. This is how it goes:

1. Second story showers need not to be tested when they are over the living space with an inaccessible void. You should inspect the ceiling in the room below.

2. Showers other than the above would be tested by filling the shower within one inch of the top of the shower dam. The water should sit for 15 minutes prior to inspecting.
3. Showers with dams less than 2 inches should be tested by running water in an unplugged shower for 5 minutes. I prefer to fill it anyway and test it after the 15 minutes. I believe it's a better test, and of course if there is no dam at all then the running water test is all you can do.
4. There is no specific method for plugging a shower but a rubber drain lid is inexpensive and professional.



Slide #10

Note taking at the end of every section of your inspection is the best approach. Most lawsuits are not from things that are missed but from things that you see and don't get on the inspection report.

Slide #11

Attic Inspection; remember when we talked about being comfortable and doing a thorough inspection? This is where it matters. More items are missed in attics than any other place because the inspector was so miserable that he/she cut the inspection short.

Also, many inspectors decide once any evidence is found in the attic, active or not, that they are done and it's time to get out. Big mistake!

Finally, remember to start at a specific point and end there, so you don't miss a thing.



Slide #12

I always enjoy watching the up-on-the-knees and 360 degree spin inspection. When you see this it's time for retraining or increasing your liability insurance. It is important to be sure that the employees that you hire for this position are physically able to do this job. It is a good idea to have all inspectors have a physical to be sure that they can physically perform the inspection as you expect it to be done.

Also, remember to clean yourself off as best you can before leaving the attic. Homeowners appreciate having their insulation left in the attic!

Slide #13

Don't forget to use that wax pencil when you find something. It'll be easier for the repairperson that comes behind you and it makes other companies inspectors after you play on the same level field.



Once again, comfort equates to a good inspection.

Slide #14

Don't forget to take down your notes at this time!

Slide #15

We've now taken the ladder out of the house. Be sure to note if you need any other equipment that you didn't use in the attic. The most obvious would be a blade to test the porch with or perhaps your moisture meter.

Again, we start our inspection at the same point. Go to the right or left and follow the foundation wall.

In cases where we have a large sub-area you will have to leave the foundation wall to inspect a plumbing area or floor mounted heating system but be sure to crawl exactly back to the place you last inspected.

Often you don't have to wander too far from the foundation wall in a small sub-area; this is good as it keeps you from missing something. In large sub-areas you have to be a bit more organized.



Slide #16

Remember, your ability to get into the tight spaces may be the difference between avoiding lawsuits and finding additional work.

Slide #17

Be sure to check all plumbing connections, this is where a moisture meter is good to have. The leak may be small but the moisture meter will find what may look fine but really is a problem that may be huge later.

Additionally, be sure to look around and away from the plumbing source. Sometimes the fungus can be yards away behind a floor joist support.



Slide #18

Be sure to do a "blade-test" on any porch attached to the sub-area foundation wall. By sliding a "blade" below the sill plate you will find out if there is soil in contact with the wooden sill plate. Treatment can be accomplished by injecting termiticides into the porch or breaking out the porch and adding a concrete barrier as shown in the diagram.

Slide #19

Time to take notes!

Slide #20

Exterior inspection; every exterior inspection starts with measuring off the perimeter to determine the dimensions of the structure. Be sure to draw a clear and concise diagram. The owner/agent will take notice to mistakes that you make and you will lose credibility.



Slide #21

Similarly to doing your inspections inside the house, you need to remember to do a zone at a time. Probe high, probe low and use any other tools that you need to examine all potential problem areas.

Slide #22

Don't forget ventilation, generally you should see lack of ventilation from the sub-area but a second look can't hurt. Also, be sure that you can reach all eaves.



Slide #23

The reason we look up and down! The question is, are the drywood pellets that are on the deck coming from up from the deck or dropping from above? How do you know?



Slide #24

Most WDO reports can call a deck that is not touching the structure to be inaccessible. Some inspectors used to use the "credit card" test. If you can slide your credit card between the deck and the structure then you can exclude it from the report.



Slide #25

Notes...Notes...Notes!

Slide #26 and #27

Inspecting garages; well depending on storage conditions and if the garage is dry-walled (finished) there can be plenty to inspect, but if the garage is packed from floor to ceiling with storage as some are it makes the inspection a bit of a challenge. Remember to note the accessibility of the garage at the time of the inspection.

There are items in almost every garage that needs to be inspected around. They include the washer, dryer and water heater.



Obviously, if these items are located somewhere else you inspect the area around them wherever they are located. Heat and moisture are major attractants for termites and fungus so do a thorough inspection.

Note that we are inspecting above the area that stores the garage door, seems obvious doesn't it?

Slide #28

I can't tell you the number of times that we see inspectors do a garage inspection with the door open.



Slide #29

Now we get to the point of taking all those notes and transferring them to the diagram and make your recommendations to the customer.

Where do you write up your report?

I prefer to do it in the house, I ask for a quiet place to complete my diagram and write up the report and contract.

If you prefer to do it in your truck you also miss another opportunity to gain the confidence of the customer, what exactly are you doing in your truck? At least do not write up your report back at the office! You may have to (depending on the company and state requirements) do a formal report back at the office but a complete diagram and contract can be reviewed and contract signed at the site.

Slide #30

Always review your inspection and diagram with the customer. Explain what you have found, how you will resolve the problem and always ask for a start date before you leave.

Most inspectors tell the customer that they will mail the report and estimate in a few days then leave as fast as they can.... More than $\frac{1}{2}$ of your sales should be completed at the time of the inspection!



Slide #31

Now that you are convinced to review the inspection with the customer and ask for the sales consider this.

Always review what a visual inspection reveals and what it doesn't.

Avoid industry slang, i.e.: "wrap your house", "drill and treat", and "poisoning the soil".

Be sure you ask about their concerns and be honest and clear on your responses. If you don't know, don't fake it. Let them know that you will research it and get back to them. When you sense there is an unusual amount of fear about a specific issue, be sure to address it specifically in your report/contract. This will avoid the wrong expectation and a lawsuit or just an unhappy customer who tells their neighbors.

Slide #32

Any Questions?