

## **Increase in Number of Home Inspectors Makes Choosing the Best Difficult**

*By Phoebe Chongchua  
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In the state of Illinois alone an increase in the number of home inspector practitioners jumped from 450 to 3,335 in the last four years.

While more competition could mean better prices for those in the market to buy or sell, home inspector and incoming President of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), Frank Lesh, cautions consumers to be wary of price cuts to save a little when such an important task in the real estate transaction is at stake.

"Caveat Emptor, or buyer beware, can best be avoided by working with an ASHI Member who follows the ASHI Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, which have become the industry standard," says Lesh.

ASHI is a professional association for home inspectors in North America. It's now in its 31st year and has nearly 7,000 members. The association holds its members accountable to standards of practice and a code of ethics.

Lesh is focusing his term on protecting the interests of consumers by reminding homeowners how to best identify an experienced home inspector -- not a simple task as the industry grows.

"The increase of home inspectors in the field has made it more difficult for consumers to differentiate between someone who just received his or her license and the experienced home inspector," said Lesh.

It's estimated that 70-75 percent of the homes bought and sold in the US are first inspected by a home inspector.

"I think there is this perception that licensing automatically means a better home inspector and that's not necessarily always true. In fact, in many cases the regulation has leveled the playing field in the mind of the home buyer or seller," says Rob Paterkiewicz Executive Director of ASHI. He adds that this mentality can put the consumer at a real disadvantage.

"There are differences in qualifications of home inspectors and doing some homework up front, pre-qualifying a couple of inspectors and having their names with you when you're walking into the process is really the best way to go," says Paterkiewicz.

The best place to start is by collecting referrals from friends, neighbors, and real estate agents. But Paterkiewicz says don't just hire an inspector without first talking to and pre-qualifying all of them.

He says to ask if they follow a standard of practice and a code of ethics and then ask to see it.

"There should be nothing hidden there. It should be right up front. Yes, I do. Here it is or I am going to email it to you or it's right here on my website," says Paterkiewicz.

He says standards are critical in the home inspection business to ensure that the consumer receives the best possible inspection.

The ASHI standards "identify everything the inspector is to inspect and it also identifies the things they are not going to inspect and those are important expectations that need to be addressed right away," explains Paterkiewicz.

Using associations and websites such as [ashi.org](http://ashi.org) to gather an understanding of the home inspection business will allow consumers to make better choices. ASHI even has a virtual home inspection tour for visitors to click through to learn what is expected when a home inspector is hired.

With so many new practitioners to the home inspection field, Paterkiewicz says don't focus strictly on the cost of the inspection when determining whom to hire.

"When there is this large group of inspectors out there, some of the inspectors are low-balling each other and throwing out crazy [low] pricing for their inspections,..." says Paterkiewicz.

He says price is a dangerous area to compete for this type of service. "You get what you pay for. You want to make sure that this person is not short- changing you by providing half of an inspection, so to speak," warns Paterkiewicz.

Another important tip is to choose at least a couple of home inspectors before you need them. Paterkiewicz says this is similar to getting pre-qualified before you shop for your home.

"Typically what will happen is you'll find your dream home and you place that purchase contract on that home and there is a contingency for a home inspection but it [gives you only a short time] to get that inspection done. So now, all of a sudden, you're scrambling to go out and get that inspector," says Paterkiewicz.

Having time and options always creates a better opportunity in real estate.

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