

# What to Expect from an Inspection

By Wendy Smith

So you've finally taken the step to purchase a site for your business and want to close the deal, but someone suggests you have the building inspected first. Why should you do that and what should you expect from a commercial site inspection?

According to Jim Salmon, a professional building inspector for both home and commercial sites, there are no rules or laws that govern or require an inspection, unless your financial institution or mortgage lender requires it. No laws require it and no guarantees are given with the reports, as they are informational documents, not warranties. Luckily, in the 10 years Mr. Salmon has done inspections, he's never had any problems, thanks in large part to the fact that he is thorough, detail-oriented, and insists that clients be present.

The main reason people do an inspection is to know the structural integrity of the building and possibly, cut costs down the road by determining the energy efficiency of the building. The process begins with an initial appointment, followed by the on-site inspection, where Salmon begins with a top-down approach by climbing up to the roof and walking on it.

After walking the roof and doing the exteriors, he proceeds to the basement, where he checks for moisture control, then checks grading and the gutter systems as well as roof water management. Thirdly, he checks the electrical system and mechanicals, beginning in the basement, where he looks for gas and carbon monoxide leaks and then also checks heating units and air-conditioning. It's important to note that it has to be at least 60 degrees F for him to accurately

test the air conditioning, so it is best not done in the winter.

Fourthly, he checks the integrity of the walls, ceilings, windows, and elevators, as well as tests and operates windows/doors, and checks outlets to make sure they're properly grounded. He winds up in the attic or if it's a warehouse space, between the ceiling and the roof, to determine how well the building is insulated. As he goes along, he does an energy audit to determine what is causing the most energy inefficiency. Would it be more cost effective to

replace the insulation, the furnace, or the windows/doors?

***No guarantees are given with the reports, as they are informational documents, not warranties.***



**Jim Salmon, professional building inspector**

The report he generates is done on-site and is a formatted, written document, which is accompanied by topographical maps and blueprints, along with digital photos. A building under 10,000 sq.ft. takes him 6-8 hours and costs about \$700, assuming there's one bathroom and no more than two heating units. Price depends on the number of heating units, since it takes time to check utilities. A retail building with ten or more stores could cost \$2500.

He rarely calls in experts since he refers clients directly to the people specialized in the work that needs to be done. Some clients ask him to provide additional services such as:

<b>Radon testing (10,000 sq ft or under)</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Septic analysis</b>	<b>\$275</b>
<b>Complete environmental scan of water</b>	<b>\$995</b>
<b>Water quality test (bacteria)</b>	<b>\$250</b>

If you are still debating about whether doing an inspection is something you need to invest in, ponder this story Salmon tells of a customer who was grateful he did. A previous client wanted to purchase a 15,000 sq. ft. commercial site near the collapsed salt mine in Livingston County. Mr. Salmon's inspection revealed that the building was heavily damaged when the mine collapsed, catapulting an earthquake. Although it wasn't visible to the naked eye, the beams were twisted and extensive repair was needed to the building. This client who was at first annoyed that he had to pay for an inspection, looked at the cost as an excellent investment, saving him not only dollars, but headaches.

Ultimately you need to decide for yourself, but Salmon's Website ([jim-salmon.com](http://jim-salmon.com)) has good resources, contract referrals, and has an extensive home repair library, which just may help make that decision for you.