



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Question: What are Home Inspectors allowed to say on inspection reports regarding wood destroying insects?

Legislation enacted in 2008, establishing the Home Inspector license (effective July 1, 2009) through the Washington Department of Licensing (DOL), intentionally provided a clear distinction between the new Home Inspector license and the existing Structural Pest Inspector license.¹

The legislation states that a Home Inspector who is not also licensed as a Structural Pest Inspector under chapter 15.58 RCW “shall only refer in his or her report to rot or conducive conditions for wood destroying organisms and shall refer the identification of or damage by wood destroying insects to a structural pest inspector licensed under chapter 15.58 RCW.” (RCW 18.280.190)

The legislation added a complementary new section to chapter 15.58 RCW stating that a person licensed as a Home Inspector is exempt from licensing as a Structural Pest Inspector except when reporting on the identification of or damage by wood destroying insects. (RCW 15.58.206)

It is WSDA’s position that RCW 18.280.190 does not allow a Home Inspector to inspect for or report on wood destroying insects. The Home Inspector law limits reporting to rot or conducive conditions for wood destroying organisms (insects or fungi). A Home Inspector may report on whether conductive conditions for wood destroying insects exist but only a licensed Structural Pest Inspector may identify wood destroying insects or damage by these insects.

The law allows, but does not require, a Home Inspector to refer incidental observations of possible wood destroying insects and/or their damage to a licensed Structural Pest Inspector. Home Inspectors must do this in a very general manner without:

- (1) Identifying or locating any insect or damage;
- (2) Drawing any conclusions;
- (3) Describing anything specifically; or,
- (4) Indicating the extent of their observations.

WSDA allows the following statement, or similar, on a Home Inspector’s report:

“Observations during the course of the inspection indicate the possible presence of wood destroying insects and/or damage by wood destroying insects. It is recommended that you contact a licensed Pest Management Professional for further evaluation.”

Any reference to wood destroying insects in a Home Inspector’s report must be incidental and not indicated as something that is normally looked for during an inspection. For example, reports that have check-boxes for “yes” or “no” to indicate a Home Inspector searched for evidence of wood destroying insects are prohibited. Any indication that a Home Inspector is performing the service of inspecting for wood destroying insects or their damage requires the person to be licensed as a Structural Pest Inspector.

For general Structural Pest Inspector licensing questions, contact WSDA Licensing Staff at (877) 301-4555. For more specific inspection related questions, contact Dan Suomi, PCO Specialist, at (360) 902-2044. Go to <http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/homeinspectors/> for information on DOL’s new Home Inspector license.

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¹ See definitions of “structural pest inspector” (RCW 15.58.030(42)), “complete wood destroying organism inspection” (RCW 15.58.030(4)) and “wood destroying organism” (RCW 15.58.030(45)).