

The following are letters responding to Jim Anderson's *Septic System Answer Man* column (February 2015) covering point-of-sale real estate inspections. You can reread Anderson's column by following this link: [http://www.pumper.com/editorial/2015/02/promote\\_real\\_estate\\_point\\_of\\_sale\\_inspections\\_to\\_protect\\_your\\_customers](http://www.pumper.com/editorial/2015/02/promote_real_estate_point_of_sale_inspections_to_protect_your_customers)

# Pondering Point-of-Sale Inspections

Readers relate when the Answer Man calls for thorough real estate inspections to protect homebuyers and build respect for the septic services industry

## Look out for the homebuyer's interests

I have read articles over the years regarding different aspects of our septic industry, and this particular article about real estate inspections is one that conjures up a lot of passion for me.

To the point of home-sale inspections of septic systems, we find that for the most part the only party who really wants to know the condition of the entire septic system is the buyer, and then only if they know or have been told by their Realtor what to ask.

It is the seller's responsibility to pay for the inspection, and the seller typically will rely on their Realtor to hire the inspector. Guess whom the Realtor hires? The inspector who will not mess up the home sale and may be half the price of others.

We pride ourselves at performing very thorough inspections, but this has led to a decline in our home-sale inspections because the Realtors gravitate toward inspectors who will not find anything wrong, do incomplete inspections, offer a cheaper price, etc. This is all because the Realtor does not



During a follow-up inspection, Alan Chapin found an interior electrical box used outdoors and no cover over a makeshift wooden frame exposing tank access lids. (Photos courtesy of Alan Chapin)

want the sale (their profit) to be put at risk, and more importantly, no one is held responsible for a complete inspection. The Realtor and seller can't disclose what they don't know, right?

We have provided numerous examples to our county sanitarians regarding inadequate inspections that have led to thousands of dollars in repairs paid for by the new homebuyer because the inspection done by "the other guy" said the system was "OK."



According to Alan Chapin, this tank received an OK from a previous point-of-sale inspection. The inlet baffle was missing and an inadequate 3-inch ABS pipe was used.

In one example, we repaired a system at a cost of \$9,000 to the homebuyer just after it was inspected (at the point of sale). Originally installed in the 1990s, the septic system was inspected a few years ago. The septic report at the time shows only a septic tank, and the system was marked that all was OK, "no deficiencies."

The septic system actually included the septic tank, pump tank, sand filter, alarm(s), drainfield, pump tank pump, sand filter pump, floats and sewage pump in the basement. The new homeowner called us to see if we could increase the size of the system. We pulled the as-built drawing and the inspection report only to discover there was a discrepancy in components listed in the time-of-sale inspection, and we recommended another inspection.

Our inspection revealed a failed sand filter; missing alarms; no inlet baffle coming into the septic tank; incorrectly sized piping; flooded inlet baffle; corroded, exposed electrical connections; root intrusion in laterals; and sludge in a manifold preventing equal distribution of effluent.

We continually find inadequate inspections by several licensed septic companies, but they continue to get the calls because they don't find problems that could jeopardize the sale, and they are cheap. There is shared responsibility from the Realtor, inspector, seller, county and homebuyer to ensure what is being sold and purchased has a properly functioning septic system that is safe.

“ Realtors gravitate toward inspectors who will not find anything wrong, do incomplete inspections, offer a cheaper price, etc. This is all because the Realtor does not want the sale (their profit) to be put at risk.”

**Alan Chapin**

and other licensed professionals on best management practices and to encourage "septic success" for our industry. When any of the points of contact involved in the septic inspection process fail to have integrity, honesty or the experience to perform the work, it only makes our job more difficult when trying to convince the owner of a septic system to take care of it.

I am working with my local county to standardize the inspection process and provide consequences for poor work, but have yet to see anyone held responsible. The unaware buyer who thought the inspection report was complete ends up paying the bill for the repairs.

We are a full-service company and have a very high standard for all work we perform, and it is part of our strategy to educate the county, homeowners, Realtors

**Alan Chapin**  
Envirotek, LLC  
Camano Island, Washington

(continued)