
The Most Expensive Defects Found in Home Inspections

What to know before the price tag surprises you.

The Most Expensive Defects Found in Home Inspections

What to know before the price tag surprises you.

Most inspection findings are manageable. A handful can run into thousands, or tens of thousands, of dollars. Knowing which defects carry the highest cost before you're in the middle of a transaction changes how you approach everything from due diligence to negotiation.

1. Sewer Line Failure

Cast iron lines in older homes corrode, crack, and collapse over time. PVC lines fail from root intrusion, improper installation, or settling. New construction is not immune: debris left in lines during the build, improper slope, and root intrusion have all been documented in homes under five years old.

Repair vs. replacement vs. lining are three different cost scenarios. Lining a compromised line runs \$3,000-\$8,000+. Full replacement: \$5,000-\$15,000+ depending on depth, access, and length.

Urgency: High. A failed line affects habitability. **What buyers typically do:** Request a sewer scope add-on before close if one wasn't done. Use the scope findings to negotiate repair, replacement, or credit.

This is why Breathe Easy recommends a sewer scope on every property.

2. HVAC System Replacement

Arizona AC units have a shorter lifespan than in most climates. Ten to fifteen years of hard use is typical in the Valley. The heat is relentless from May through September. Full system replacement runs \$6,000-\$15,000+ depending on tonnage and configuration.

We document age, condition, and any functional issues. An aging system that's still running is a known future expense. A failed system is an immediate one.

Urgency: High in summer. An inoperable system in Phoenix is not a comfort issue. It's a health issue.

What buyers typically do: Request credit for aging systems approaching end of life, or negotiate replacement on systems that have already failed.

3. Roof Replacement

Tile roofs in Arizona can last 20-30 years, but the underlayment beneath them often fails sooner. Flat roofs, common across the Valley, require regular maintenance and eventual re-coating or full replacement. Full roof replacement: \$8,000-\$25,000+ depending on size, pitch, and material.

We document condition, visible wear, and any areas of active concern. Tile condition, flashing, and penetrations all factor in.

Urgency: Variable. Active leaks are immediate. Deferred maintenance and worn underlayment are real, but the timeline has some flexibility. **What buyers typically do:** Request a licensed roofing contractor evaluation for any flagged concerns, then negotiate based on that estimate.

4. Foundation Issues

Arizona's expansive clay soils move with moisture. Most foundation cracking is cosmetic and expected in the climate. Structural movement is a different situation: differential settlement, significant crack patterns, or doors and windows that no longer operate correctly can indicate something worth investigating further.

Structural foundation repair ranges from \$5,000 for pier installation to \$30,000+ for significant stabilization work.

Urgency: Depends on severity. We flag what we see and recommend a structural engineer evaluation when warranted. An engineer's assessment gives you real data before any negotiation. **What buyers typically do:** Commission a structural engineer evaluation before writing a repair request. That report is the basis for negotiation, not the inspection finding alone.

5. Electrical Panel Replacement

Outdated panels (Federal Pacific, Zinsco, older fuse boxes) are a safety and insurance concern. Many insurers won't write policies on homes with these panels, or charge significantly higher premiums. Panel replacement runs \$2,500-\$5,000+. Full rewiring of a home for more serious deficiencies costs significantly more.

We document panel make, model, condition, and any safety concerns found.

Urgency: High. Insurance issues can block close. Safety concerns don't wait. **What buyers typically do:** Request panel replacement prior to close, or negotiate a credit and handle it after. Insurance requirements sometimes force the timeline.

6. Water Intrusion and Moisture Damage

A slow leak behind a wall or under a slab can become a significant remediation project. Water damage remediation and mold mitigation: \$3,000-\$20,000+ depending on scope, materials affected, and how long the intrusion has been active.

We flag any visible evidence of moisture intrusion and recommend further evaluation when the scope is unclear.

Urgency: High. Active moisture causes ongoing damage. The longer it goes, the more expensive it gets. **What buyers typically do:** Request a licensed contractor evaluation to scope the damage before negotiating. The cost range is wide enough that you need a real number before agreeing to any credit.

7. Plumbing Repipe

Galvanized steel supply lines corrode from the inside out. Reduced flow and discolored water are signs you're late in the process. Polybutylene pipe, used in homes built between roughly 1978 and 1995, is prone to failure and was the subject of a class action settlement. Full repipe in a typical Arizona home:

\$4,000-\$12,000+.

We document pipe material and condition. Repipe recommendations come from a licensed plumber after evaluation.

Urgency: Variable. A full galvanized system in a 40-year-old home is a known future expense. Polybutylene with evidence of prior failure is more urgent. **What buyers typically do:** Factor repipe cost into the purchase price or negotiate a credit, particularly on older homes where the material is well past its expected service life.

What to Do With This Information

These findings don't end transactions. They inform them. A buyer who knows the cost range of a sewer line replacement before they close is in a completely different position than one who finds out six months later. The Breathe Easy report documents what's there. What you do with that information (in negotiation, in due diligence, in decision-making) is where it pays off.

Questions about a specific finding? Call Konnor.

(480) 254-5708 | breatheeasyinspectionsaz@gmail.com

Breathe Easy Home Inspections | Gilbert, AZ | Konnor Kirkwood, Lead Inspector, AZ BTR #72416 | ASHI Certified | InterNACHI Member



"Your Home. Your Health. Our Priority."

(480) 254-5708

breatheeasyinspectionsaz@gmail.com

breatheeasyhomeinspections.com