



LIFE EXPECTANCY FOR COMMON HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

The purpose of this document is to help the Realtor set realistic expectations as to the value of a property if the property has a major defect. Here is an example, if you were in the process of selling (under contract) a house and an inspection determined that the house had a major defect such as knob and tube wiring, aluminum wiring, polybutylene piping, or Chinese drywall, these issues could potentially be deal breakers. This document has date (year) ranges when the issues were most prevalent where applicable. Letting the seller know that the issue may be present before listing, could help take the surprise out of the negotiation process if a defect is found.

USED FROM APPROX. 1880 TO THE 1940s

KNOB AND TUBE WIRING

Knob and tube (K&T) wiring was an early standardized method of electrical wiring from about 1880 to the 1940s. The system is considered obsolete and can be a safety hazard, although some of the fear associated with it is undeserved.

USED FROM APPROX. 1965 TO 1973

ALUMINUM WIRING

Between approximately 1965 and 1973, single-strand aluminum wiring was sometimes substituted for copper branch-circuit wiring in residential electrical systems due to the sudden escalating price of copper. After a decade of use by homeowners and electricians inherent weaknesses were discovered in the metal that led to its disuse as a branch wiring material.

USED FROM APPROX. LATE 70s TO THE MID 90s

POLYBUTYLENE PIPES

Polybutylene Pipes (PB) is a plastic manufactured between 1978 and 1994 for use as piping in home plumbing systems. It offered plenty of advantages over other materials such as flexibility, ease of installation, resistance to freezing, and it was inexpensive. Pipes made from polybutylene were installed in 6 to 10 million homes in the United States during that period. Despite its strengths, production was ceased in 1994 after scores of allegations surfaced claiming that polybutylene pipes were rupturing and causing property damage. In the homes that still contain this material, homeowners must either pay to have the pipes replaced or risk a potentially expensive plumbing failure.

USED FROM APPROX. 2004 TO 2007

CHINESE DRYWALL

Amidst a wave of Chinese import scares, ranging from toxic toys to tainted pet food, reports of contaminated drywall from that country have been popping up across the American Southeast. Chinese companies use unrefined “fly ash,” a coal residue found in smokestacks in coal-fired power plants in their manufacturing process. Fly ash contains strontium sulfide, a toxic substance commonly found in fireworks. In hot and wet environments, this substance can give off gas into hydrogen sulfide, carbon disulfide, and carbonyl sulfide and contaminate a home’s air supply.

The bulk of these incidents have been reported in Florida and other southern states, likely due to the high levels of heat and humidity in that region. Most of the affected homes were built during the housing boom between 2004 and 2007, especially in the wake of Hurricane Katrina when domestic building materials were in short supply. An estimated 250,000 tons of drywall were imported from China during that time period because it was cheap and plentiful. This material was used in the construction of approximately 100,000 homes in the United States, and many believe that has led to serious health and property damage.

Below is a list of items and their life expectancies that can be referenced before listing a property. For example, the heat pump A/C may be running fine, but the unit is 16 years old and the life expectancy is 10-15 years for the unit. The inspector points this out to the buyer, and the buyer then asks the seller for a \$4,000 reduction on the price of the property. This may be a deal breaker but had this issue been mentioned previously it may become a non-issue.

How long should the components that make up your house last before replacement? Below are average life expectancies in years. Actual may be different depending on quality, usage, and external forces.

APPLIANCES	YEARS
Air Conditioner (window)	5 to 7
Compactor (trash)	6
Dishwasher	9
Disposal (food waste)	12
Dryer (clothes)	13
Freezer	10 to 20
Gas Oven	10 to 18
Microwave Oven	9
Range/Oven Hood	14
Electric Range	13 to 15
Gas Range	15 to 17
Refrigerator	9 to 13
Washing Machine	5 to 15

HVAC	YEARS
Air Conditioner (central)	7 to 15
Heat Pump	10 to 15

ROOFING	YEARS
Aluminum Coating	3 to 7
Asphalt Shingles (3-tab)	20
Asphalt (architectural)	30
BUR (built-up roofing) (gravel and tar)	30
Clay/Concrete	100+
Copper	70+
EPDM (ethylene propylene diene monomer) Rubber	15 to 25
Fiber Cement	25
Metal	40 to 80
Modified Bitumen	20
Simulated Slate	10 to 35
Slate	60 to 150

SWIMMING POOLS	YEARS
Concrete Shell	25+
Filter and Pump	10
Interior Finish	10 to 35
Vinyl Liner	10
Pool Water Heater	8