

# The Commercial Inspector

A Monthly Newsletter From National Property Inspections

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## ask the inspector

**Q. I'm considering buying an apartment building. It looks like it's in really great condition. Do I really need to spend the money to have it inspected?**

A. Investing in commercial properties can be a lucrative business and a sound financial decision. Understanding more about the general condition of the commercial property with a commercial property inspection can help you make the best decisions regarding the purchase and maintenance of the property from day one. Prospective buyers can glean a good, general overview of the property and its history with a comprehensive visual inspection by a commercial property inspector.



Whether you are a building owner, property manager, leasing agent, lender or tenant, you will need information on the condition of properties you occupy or manage. Apartment complexes may be several stories tall.

## snapshots from the field

### What Is This Photo?



- A ) A fresh air damper system in a brick-lined return air vent
- B ) A movable wall system
- C ) A wall of blank canvas in an art gallery
- D ) An abandoned mine shaft

*( answer on the back )*

A water leak shows up as discoloration on the ceiling of a basement apartment. Where did it come from — the shower one story up, a laundry room on the top floor, or even a failed flat roof? This is just one of questions a professional commercial property inspector may be able to answer.

Besides checking the overall condition of walls, ceilings, floors and stairways, a commercial property inspector looks at lots and grounds, electrical systems, heating and cooling systems, and plumbing to determine their overall condition and safety. At the conclusion of the inspection, the you will receive a comprehensive report of the findings, including digital pictures, which help identify specific locations requiring review or repair.



Your commercial property inspector should start by discussing the inspection process with you, including time deadlines and the scope of the inspection. Commercial inspections are individualized to fit your needs and scope. A few of the most popular commercial inspections include comprehensive inspections of the entire building for the buyers/investors prior to closing; partial inspections of a single component, like flat roofs; and maintenance inspections for property management firms.



## maintenance matters

### Energy Efficiency and Maintenance Tips for Commercial HVAC Systems

With winter in full swing, it's time to give a little TLC to your commercial HVAC systems to protect your investment in the system, increase the system's life, and keep building occupants comfortable and safe. Here are five key HVAC maintenance tips:



- » Studies have shown that routine maintenance is crucial for energy efficiency in commercial HVAC systems. Create a preventive maintenance schedule for every season and adhere to it.

- » Have a commercial HVAC professional calibrate all of the thermostats in your building. If thermostats are too far away from each other, your HVAC systems will not be as efficient as they could be.
- » Have your HVAC system inspected and cleaned during the winter to prevent the risk of harmful gasses — such as carbon monoxide — from being released into the air.
- » Your HVAC system is probably equipped with an economizer, which enables “free cooling” — the unit uses outdoor air for cooling, provided the ambient air is below a certain temperature and the humidity is below a certain percentage. If the economizer dampers are stuck closed, you will not be able to take advantage of free cooling. If the damper is stuck open, frigid air will be brought in and heated — resulting in wasted energy.
- » Your HVAC system's filters trap dust and other particles, so they require regular changing. A dirty filter can restrict air flow and reduce the efficiency of your HVAC system.

## did you know?

### What Commercial Clients Does NPI Serve?

NPI serves the following types of commercial clients:

- » Investors: Prepurchase and property condition assessments (PCAs)
- » Corporations and owner-occupants: Maintenance and prepurchase inspections
- » Real-estate investment managers and trusts: Third-party documentation reports
- » Owners with tenants leasing buildings: Maintenance inspections
- » Commercial lenders: Draw/progress inspections on new construction projects or major remodeling
- » Banks, lenders and bank trust departments: Verify business activity or occupancy, and property condition
- » Insurance companies: Verify repairs after claims or for underwriting of coverage after claims
- » Property management companies: Determine the condition of properties under management care

### Snapshots from the field

*The correct answer is A. This is a fresh air damper system, which provides fresh air to the building. A control operates the fresh air intake damper and, when necessary, activates the main HVAC blower to efficiently meet ventilation rates.*