

Source: Realtor magazine, April 2008

## Five Potential Dangers in a Home

Home inspection company Pillar to Post has identified these common dangers. Point out these household hazards to buyers and sellers and advise clients to contact a home inspector to make sure these problems aren't present.

### Hazardous Products

Stockpiles of household items—such as paint solvents, pesticides, fertilizers, and motor oils—can create a dangerous situation if not properly stored or disposed. They can cause illness or even death if small amounts are ingested.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Make sure these items aren't tucked away in corners, crawl spaces, garages, or garden sheds. Home owners often don't realize these products can pose a danger and may forget they're storing them. But buyers don't want it to become their problem—and expense—to dispose of. If these products are found, make sure the buyer requires their removal and gets a disposal certificate prior to closing, which proves the products were disposed of properly and not just dumped in the backyard.

### Groundwater Contamination

Hazardous chemicals that are illegally disposed of can seep through the soil and enter water supplies. A leaking underground oil tank or faulty septic system can also lead to contamination.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Look for any conditions that may be conducive to leakage. Homes near light industrial areas or facilities may be at risk. Also a concern: areas once used for industry that are now residential. Pillar to Post offers a Neighborhood Environmental Report that details any dangers or remedies of environmental incidences and sources of contamination that have occurred at a specified address and within its vicinity.

### Radon

This colorless, odorless gas can seep into the home from the ground and has been called the second most common cause of lung cancer.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Basements or any protrusions into the ground offer entry points for radon. The Environmental Protection Agency publishes a map of high prevalence areas for radon ([www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon)). A radon test can determine if high levels of radon are present.

### Lead

This toxic metal, used in home products for many years, can contribute to several health problems, especially among children. Exposure can occur from deteriorating lead-based paint, lead pipes, or lead-contaminated dust or soil.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Homes built prior to 1978 may have lead present. Look for peeling paint and check old pipes. To get a HUD-insured loan, buyers must show a certificate that homes built prior to 1978 are lead-safe.

### Asbestos

This fibrous material—once popular in building materials because it provides heat insulation and fire resistance—was banned in 1985. It may still be found in older homes' insulation materials, floor tiles, roof coverings, and siding. If disturbed or damaged, it can enter the air and cause severe illness.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Homes built before 1985 are at risk of having asbestos within construction materials. Home owners should be careful when remodeling because disturbing insulation may cause the asbestos to become airborne.

Two most common culprits

of modern air quality issues:

Candles and air fresheners