

One in five new properties has major faults

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KOTA KINABALU: One in every five newly completed properties has some major faults in plumbing, roofing or dampness, which would eventually cause a financial burden to the owners in terms of repairs and maintenance.

For older properties, safety features such as the passive fire-fighting features (e.g. fire doors), and active systems like hose reels, extinguishers and detectors are usually not regularly maintained.

Concrete cancer and structural leaks (from open slabs etc) are also prevalent and expensive to repair. These leaks have serious safety and quality-of-life implications including capital depreciation for the property owner.

Such were the conditions that Architect Centre found while conducting property inspections, revealed Architect and Property Inspector Ar. Anthony Lee Tee in his presentation, *“Building Inspection for Quality Housing”* at the recent Sabah Housing Conference 2009 on Good Governance Towards Quality Housing and Services.

Architect Centre Sdn Bhd, an independent inspection and building advisory centre was set up by the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) in May 2008 in a joint venture with Archicentre Ltd, a fully-owned subsidiary of the Australian Institute of Architects.

Architect Centre aims to advise stakeholders and the public on issues affecting property, home ownership and the construction industry with a view to strengthen the industry and empower the public through education.

Also a trainer in Accreditation Training Courses for Property Inspection, Lee said inspection of buildings was becoming a necessity for newly handed over properties as well as for old buildings for maintenance purposes. Accreditation courses are conducted by Architect Centre for corporate architects who intend to provide independent inspection service as part of their business.

“With rising consumer, expectations on quality workmanship, there is a need for professional building inspections to help property purchasers look out for building defects that may affect them financially and socially,” he added.



Lee outlined the typical building faults as:

- Rising Damp (33%)
- Defective Framing (20%)
- Illegal Building (30%)
- Timber Rot (46%)
- Cracking Brickwork (43%)
- Electrical Problems (34%)
- Roofing Faults (54%)
- Water Problems (15%)

“Despite regulatory measures, guidelines and standards imposed by the government, many problems still persist for property buyers especially in quality workmanship and non-compliances with statutory

requirements. Several contributory factors that still prevail include lack of supervision, lack of knowledge, unskilled labour, communication breakdown and integrity.

“Hence, a defect has its own history and by understanding the contributing factors that give rise to the defect, the source or the root of the problems can be identified and determined.”

He stressed an inspection is necessary to produce a report containing information in the form of photographs, key drawings and recommendations.

“This report is a valuable source of reference for those responsible for managing and maintaining the building now and in the future. In addition, the report is also useful for problem identification, mitigation and risk management.

“An independent inspection is carried out by a qualified third party – without fear or favour. The inspection states and record what is seen and elucidated from the nature of the given problem. An objective and unbiased statement of facts provides the basis towards resolving a problem in the interest of all stakeholders. The inspectors provide valuable information about the condition of a building. The professional inspectors also provide services to evaluate the building for verification to meet industry standards and regulatory requirements.”

“According to him, Architect Centre’s inspection reports provide a complete diagnosis of the defects identified. The inspectors’ analysis identifies the probable factors causing a defect that would potentially cause several impacts. From the comprehensive diagnosis, remedial action is recommended.

“Therefore, such a comprehensive and impartial inspection determines the extent of the problem, its potential risks and impacts, and the rectifications and improvements to be done. An impact denotes a more serious issue at hand with varying degrees and levels that may have long-term effects on a building.”

In this regards, he said, valuable information is provided to help the owner or occupant understand possible and actual causes of the building defects. A review of both positive and negative effects of such defects allows the affected parties an opportunity to identify potential unintended consequences and to nip it in the bud.

“Some defects, such as a crack on the wall may seem like a minor problem at first. But a 5mm crack could be a major defect if the crack is long and it is among the many seen on the building’s support beam, and is still developing. In this case, it is a potential problem which may later affect the stability of the building and consequently, the safety of its occupants.

“Therefore, knowledge on the potential impact of the defect will enable the correct solutions to be applied to ensure long-term security and stability of a building.”

With Architect Centre’s system of identifying building defects and feedback, the centre hopes that eventually the quality of properties will improve while promoting a mindset change in quality assurance standards in terms of accountability in workmanship and to meet consumers’ expectation of greater quality standards for the property that they are investing in, he said.