

Knowing The Environment Around Your Home

By Dan McCormick

When purchasing residential properties it has become the standard to do many checks such as home inspection, water quality, crime rates and school districts. However rarely do we look at the neighborhood we will live in from an environmental standpoint. Many lending institutions require extensive environmental reporting to be done on commercial properties costing in the thousands of dollars. Why do they do this? They are not willing to risk the potential loss that could come on a high dollar purchase due to environmental issues. As a residential buyer we should think like a bank if not for the potential financial loss we should be concerned about the potential health loss! In today's society we are taught to "think outside the box" yet on the largest purchase we will ever make people rarely think outside the box.

Even the most pristine and upscale neighborhoods can have environmental issues that could effect your health or resale value of your home. A leaking underground tank, EPA superfund site and many other potential environmental hazards will not be selective on what type of neighborhood they will affect. Leaking underground tanks, toxic spills, toxic waist sites, EPA Superfund sites, METH lab sites and many more all have the potential to contaminate ground water, soil and air quality. Usually less then 10% of the reports run bring back issues within 300 feet of the property nevertheless 10% is not something you want to gamble with on the health of your family. This is why it is critical to do your research on the place that you and your family will spend the majority of your time. Even if a report comes back with an issue it does not mean that the property is not the right place for you but it will give the knowledge that you need to do more research on what may or may not need to be done to the property. This will empower you to make an educated decision on your next move.

How do you find out if there are environmental issues around your neighborhood? You could spend countless hours trying to search hundreds of websites looking at many government databases to decide what could affect you and your family. One problem is that most of us have little spare time to do this research. Another problem is that the average home buyer is not qualified to know how to interpret environmental information and what data bases have current and accurate data. The good news is there are other alternatives hire a profession company trained in this research! Do not worry the cost is much less then you may think.

You will need to know a few things when hiring a company to do this reporting. Where do I go to hire a company? What do I ask to ensure that the company I hire will have the most accurate and understandable data possible. Your local home inspectors are usually the first place you should look. Many of the home inspectors today are getting certified through qualified companies to run your Neighborhood Environmental Reports. Below you will find a checklist on what to ask your home inspector about the environmental reporting system they are using and why. Please understand that the reports are database reports and can only find known reported issues.

Neighborhood Environmental Reporting Checklist

- ✓ **Is the person providing the Neighborhood Environmental Report certified through the company they use?** This is important because qualified companies usually require you to be certified to provide the report. The certification usually involves training and testing.
- ✓ **What Company do they use for there reporting and how long has the company been doing environmental reporting?** There are many ways to get this information but you want to make sure the company they use has the experience you need. A company with at least 10 years experience is a good place to start.
- ✓ **Does the environmental reporting company provide commercial information?** Usually commercial environmental companies have more extensive data bases and experience in this type of reporting.
- ✓ **Is the company nation wide?** Usually national companies have more in depth database searching capabilities.
- ✓ **What is the report looking for and where?** A qualified company will research local, federal and tribal databases for known contamination and potential contamination.
- ✓ **What is the format of the report?** It is critical to use a company that can provide a simple format reporting system. Many environmental reports are provided in a scientific format that will only confuse the residential buyer.
- ✓ **How much do they charge?** You can usually get a quality Residential Neighborhood Environmental report for under \$150.00
- ✓ **How log does it take?** You should be able to receive your report within 2 days from the time it is ordered.
- ✓ **Will they meet with you explain the report?** It is important for the report provider to either meet in person or explain the report over the phone so that you have the opportunity to clarify any questions.