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For more years than I can recall, getting the "clearance letter" was a required part of the real estate transaction process. The inspection reported if there was any active or previous infestation from wood destroying organisms that could weaken the structural integrity of your home – and ultimately lower its market value. The "letter" was also an opportunity for the transfer of any existing warranties to be passed along to a new owner.

The Department's Structural Pest Control Division regulated the inspection according to Rules passed by the Structural Pest Control Commission. It's been a good process that protected consumers and insured the structural integrity of their home from infestation.

We still regulate the WDO* inspection – which is still requested for many real estate transactions. However, the "clearance letter" is no longer required due to recent changes in the Georgia Real Estate contracts. The inspection for termites and other wood destroying organisms is now wholly discretionary.

Our Department has heard some stories of folks moving to our state from places that don't have termites. Since they didn't realize how critical the inspection was, the new homeowners closed on their home and later learned that they had severe termite damage.

According to the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, subterranean termites cost the Georgia public tens of millions of dollars PER YEAR in damage, repair and control costs. Because of our humid southern climate, Georgia is one of the most highly infested termite and wood destroying insect states in the nation.

Be sure to ask your real estate professional if the property you are purchasing has an existing termite warranty. If the structure has been treated, you can save hundreds of dollars by continuing the guarantee.

Be a wise consumer. Pests are a big problem in Georgia and your home is your most valuable asset. And remember - The Department of Agriculture regulates this industry as a service to Georgia taxpayers.

Article from Commissioner of Agriculture Tommy Irvin

**Wood Destroying Organism*