REAL ESTATE EDUCATION SERIES

RE/MAX Properties

Why a Sewer Scope Matters

See beneath the surface before buying a home

Doug Petersen
Broker Associate | RE/MAX Properties

A sewer scope uses a camera to inspect the accessible wastewater line from the home toward the public sewer or septic connection. It can reveal hidden problems that a general home inspection may not cover, helping you budget for repairs and make informed purchase decisions.

01 Why inspect a line that seems to work?

A drain can flow today despite developing defects. Buried repairs may involve excavation, pavement, or landscaping. Scope early enough to get estimates before inspection deadlines. Newer homes can also have installation defects or construction debris.

02 Older pipe materials deserve closer attention

Orangeburg, a bituminous fiber pipe, is vulnerable to deformation, separation of layers, and collapse. Clay or terra-cotta sections can crack or develop displaced joints that admit roots. Aging cast iron can corrode and accumulate scale. Age and condition matter more than material alone.

03 Modern pipes are not immune to problems

PVC and ABS resist corrosion but can have poor connections, cracks, or low spots from inadequate bedding or ground movement. Mixed-material transitions and past repairs also deserve review. Ask the inspector to identify materials and limitations rather than guessing from the home's age.

04 What the camera may reveal

A scope can show roots, grease or debris, corrosion, cracks, holes, separated or offset joints, deformation, and collapse. Standing water may suggest a low spot, or “belly,” needing further evaluation. Request the recording, a written report, distances to defects, and confirmation of how far the camera reached.

05 Match the remedy to the defect

Cleaning or root cutting may restore flow but does not repair damaged pipe; roots may return. A localized defect may need a spot repair. Suitable lines may be rehabilitated with a cured-in-place liner or replaced by pipe bursting. Collapsed pipe, severe offsets, or poor slope may require excavation and replacement.

06 Get a repair plan before committing

Have a qualified sewer contractor review the video and provide written options, permits, restoration costs, and warranty terms. Lining generally does not correct a belly or poor slope. Confirm owner-versus-utility responsibility locally; discuss any repair request or credit with Doug Petersen within contract deadlines.

KNOW THE LIMITS - AND VERIFY THE REPAIR

Water, blockages, bends, or missing access can conceal defects or prevent a full scope. The camera does not prove the line is leak-free or inspect an entire septic system. Ask whether cleaning and a repeat scope are needed, and obtain a post-repair video when appropriate.

Doug Petersen | 970-290-3000 | Resources: Seattle Utilities repair guidance; contractor material overview; Colorado Springs Utilities responsibilities. Educational summary; repair suitability and local requirements vary. Each office independently owned and operated.