

# TOP 5 GENERAL LIABILITY CLAIMS

## AGAINST HOME INSPECTORS



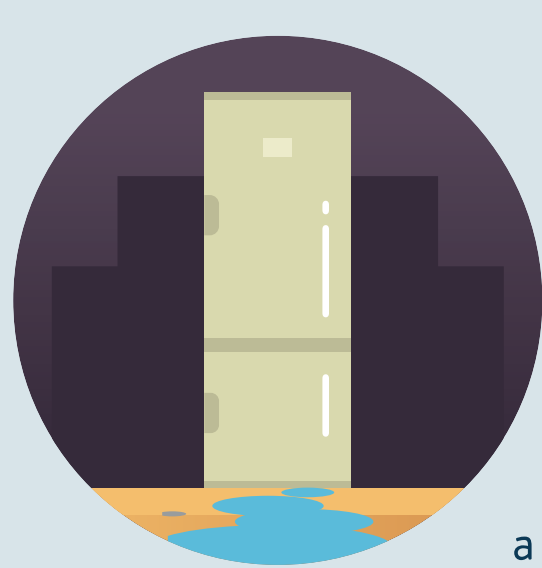
### 1 WATER DAMAGE

**Claim Example:** During the course of the inspection, a home inspector turned the water on to inspect the water system. The inspector did not terminate a quarter inch water supply line in the basement properly. As a result, the water supply line released water for a full two days after the inspection, resulting in flooding and over \$4,500 in damage.



**Why It's Common:** To inspect the water system, you have to run water from a lot of appliances and fixtures. With so many systems and components to examine, it's easy to forget to shut off just one water supply line. And, when you do, the leak can cause a lot of damage quickly—especially if the leak goes unnoticed for an extended period of time.

**What You Can Do:** While it's tempting to save time, never turn on the water and walk away. Inspect every property systematically so that you're less likely to miss important steps, like turning off the water. And, before leaving the property, be sure to check that the water is off in all places it could be on.



### 2 POWER OUTAGE

**Claim Example:** While testing the exterior wall outlets, a home inspector tripped the GFCI breaker in the garage. Due to excessive storage in the garage, the inspector couldn't locate the wall outlet to reset the GFCI. He made a note of this in his report. Unfortunately, those that read the report overlooked the tripped breaker, leading the seller, a scientist, to find out some time later. The seller had three refrigerators in the garage to store rare seeds. She demanded the home inspector pay \$500,000 to compensate for the loss of the rare seeds. Lucky for the inspector, the seller dropped the claim for reasons unrelated to the inspection.

**Why It's Common:** Tripped breakers and GFCIs can lead to a lot of issues. However, the most common allegation we receive involves food. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), during a power outage, a refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours while a half-full freezer will keep temperature for about 24 hours. If power isn't restored before the cool time is up, food can spoil. While not every seller is a food scientist, increased interest in healthy and organic foods gives sellers more to lose if the power goes out.

**What You Can Do:** Depending on the inspection property, the power may be on or off when you arrive. Note the power's status when you start the inspection and restore the power to that status at the end of your inspection. Assuming the power is supposed to be on, test the power in multiple areas of the home—especially problem areas like refrigerators and freezers—before you leave. Be sure to securely close any refrigerator or freezer doors you may open, too. If the power shuts off and you cannot turn it back on, do not simply note it in your report. Inform the current home occupants immediately so they can take urgent action to restore the power and prevent potential loss. Some home inspectors in areas where hunting is common may opt not to test breakers and GFCIs in properties with large freezers.

### 3 CEILING HOLE

**Claim Example:** While inspecting an attic, a home inspector accidentally stepped through the ceiling. The fall formed a hole and caused damage to the kitchen below. It cost \$900 to repair the damage.



**Why It's Common:** Many attics lack safe walking surfaces. Instead, attics are riddled with trusses, framing, and loose boards that are unstable to walk on.

**What You Can Do:** Be cautious. Do not enter an attic without a walkway and adequate head room. We don't recommend walking an attic when insulation completely obscures the ceiling joists, either. Be skeptical of makeshift walkways made of planks laid across joists. Ultimately, you do not want to enter an attic that poses a risk of damaging the property or injuring yourself. If it's unsafe to traverse the attic, inspect the attic through an opening and note that you did so and why in your report.



### 4 GARAGE DOOR

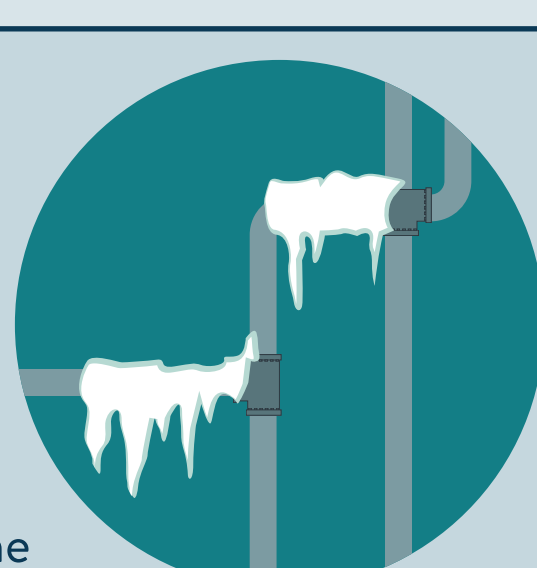
**Claim Example:** While testing the resistance of the reverse jam function on an automatic garage door, the function failed to reverse. As a result, the center arm broke off and two of the panels were damaged. The claim cost \$1,020 in repairs.

**Why It's Common:** Garage door systems are more than just panels and frames. The systems have openers, springs, and cables, and each individual piece can have problems. Some garage door servicemen recommend that homeowners make a preventative maintenance call for their garage once a year. However, most homeowners don't service their garage doors until there's a problem. And, because they aren't having a professional come out and test the door, homeowners often don't discover issues until they have a home inspection.

**What You Can Do:** Virtually every garage door-related claim we receive comes from the performance test. Note that there is no provision in the American Society of Home Inspectors' (ASHI) or International Association of Certified Home Inspectors' (InterNACHI) Standards of Practice (SoPs) requiring home inspectors to inspect or test the pressure-activated auto reverse of a garage door opener. As such, to best avoid liability, home inspectors should not test the auto reverse function and say that they did not test it in their report. However, if you choose to test the feature, be careful to not cause damage when executing performance tests.

### 5 FROZEN PLUMBING

**Claim Example:** During an inspection in the northeast in the late winter, a home inspector turned off the boiler to inspect the chimney flu. Following the flu inspection, the inspector forgot to turn the boiler back on. After the inspector left, the low temperatures in the home caused the piping to freeze and burst. It cost nearly \$6,000 to repair and replace the frozen plumbing lines.



**Why It's Common:** When checking major systems and components, you often have to turn those systems off. With so many items to examine during your inspection, it's easy to forget to turn things back on. In most of our frozen plumbing claims, home inspectors neglect to leave the heater or boiler on during a winter inspection. Occasionally, inspectors fail to adequately seal crawlspace access.

**What You Can Do:** To avoid mistakes, make sure to inspect every home the same way. Do not deviate from one house to the other. By being consistent across inspections, you develop a routine that better prevents you from forgetting important steps. Additionally, if you're inspecting in the winter, double-check that the heating is on before you leave.

## PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS AGAINST GENERAL LIABILITY CLAIMS

Now that you know the most common general liability allegation types, you are better equipped to avoid those claims. However, even when you inspect your best, you still can make mistakes. That's why it's essential to carry general liability insurance to protect your business from bodily injury and property damage claims. [Apply today](#) to receive a quote at no obligation.