

## Skagit County Home Inspection (King of the House): Improper Plumbing

One of the most commonly seen problems at a home inspection is the placement of an S-trap at a sink where a P-trap should be. Basically, to the novice plumber, as long as the pipes fit and do not leak, then all is well.

As far as the S-trap vs. the P-trap, what is the big deal? Well, first, one must realize that the trap is there, to begin with, to retain water in the pipe/trap. That is what keeps sewer gas (smelly, unhealthy) from entering up into the home through the drain. Although the S-trap and the P-trap look similar, that is where the similarities end. The P-trap does its job of blocking sewer gas, assuming that the sink is used regularly -- any trap can go dry if water is never run at the sink. The S-trap, at the other extreme, is identified by professional plumbers as potentially "siphoning." In short, that means that as it drains, the S-trap may discharge all of the water that should remain in the trap. That will leave the trap dry.

Take a look at the photos below for a better understanding of the two different traps. The stores do not specifically sell S-traps and P-traps. The problem comes in when the novice buys basic parts and does not understand the principal behind traps. When that is the situation, often, he or she will then, incorrectly, assemble the various fittings.



S-trap



P-trap

Thanks for stopping by,

Steven L. Smith

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