

Standards of Practice of the American Society of Home Inspectors®

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The American Society of Home Inspectors®, Inc. (ASHI®) is a not-for profit professional society established in 1976. Membership in ASHI® is voluntary and its members are private home inspectors. ASHI®'s objectives include promotion of excellence within the profession and continual improvement of its members' inspection services to the public.

2. PURPOSE & SCOPE

2.1 The purpose of these Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for home inspectors who subscribe to these Standards of Practice. Home Inspections performed to these Standards of Practice are intended to provide the client with objective information regarding the condition of the systems and components of the home as inspected at the time of the Home Inspection. Redundancy in the description of the requirements, limitations, and exclusions regarding the scope of the home inspection is provided for emphasis only.

2.2 The Inspector shall:

- A. adhere to the Code of Ethics of the American Society of Home Inspectors.
- B. inspect readily accessible, visually observable, installed systems and components listed in these Standards of Practice.
- C. report:
 1. on those systems and components inspected that, in the professional judgment of the inspector, are not functioning properly, significantly deficient, unsafe, or are near the end of their service lives.
 2. recommendations to correct, or monitor for future corrections, the deficiencies reported in 2.2.C.1., or items needing further evaluation. (Per Exclusion 13.2.A.5 inspectors are NOT required to determine methods, materials, or costs of corrections.)
 3. reasoning or explanation as to the nature of the deficiencies reported in 2.2.C.1, that are not self-evident.
 4. systems and components designated for inspection in these Standards of Practice that were present at the time of the Home Inspection but were not inspected and the reason(s) they were not inspected.

2.3 These Standards of Practice are not intended to limit inspectors from:

- A. including other inspection services or systems and components in addition to those required in Section 2.2.B.
- B. designing or specifying repairs, provided the inspector is appropriately qualified and willing to do so.
- C. excluding systems and components from the inspection if requested by the client.

3. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

3.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. structural components including the foundation and framing.
2. by probing a representative number of structural components where deterioration is suspected or where clear indications of possible deterioration exist. Probing is NOT required when probing would damage any finished surface or where no deterioration is visible or presumed to exist.

B. describe:

1. the methods used to inspect under-floor crawl space and attics.
2. the foundation.
3. the floor structure.
4. the wall structure.
5. the ceiling structure.
6. the roof structure.

3.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. provide any engineering service or architectural services or analysis.
- B. offer an opinion as to the adequacy of any structural system or component.

4. EXTERIOR

4.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. siding, flashing and trim.
2. all exterior doors.
3. attached or adjacent decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings.
4. eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
5. vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls that are likely to adversely affect the building.
6. adjacent or entryway walkways, patios, and driveways.

B. describe:

1. siding

4.2 The inspector is NOT required to inspect:

- A. screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.
- B. fences.
- C. geological and/or soil conditions.
- D. recreational facilities.
- E. outbuildings other than garages and carports.
- F. seawalls, break-walls, and docks.
- G. erosion control and earth stabilization measures.

5. ROOFING

5.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. roofing materials.
2. the roof drainage systems.
3. flashing.
4. the skylights, chimneys, and roof penetrations.

B. describe

1. roofing materials
2. methods used to inspect the roofing.

5.2 The inspector is NOT required to inspect:

- A. antennae
 - B. interiors of flues or chimneys that are not readily accessible.
 - C. other installed accessories.
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6. PLUMBING

6.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. interior water supply and distribution systems including all fixtures and faucets.
2. drain, waste and vent systems including all fixtures.
3. water heating equipment and hot water supply system.
4. vent systems, flues and chimneys.
5. fuel storage and fuel distribution systems.
6. drainage sumps, sump pumps, and related piping.

B. describe:

1. water supply, drain, waste, and vent piping materials.
2. water heating equipment including the energy source(s).
3. location of main water and fuel shut-off valves.

6.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect:

1. clothes washing machine connections.
2. interiors of flues or chimneys that are not readily accessible.
3. wells, well pumps, or water storage related equipment.
4. water conditioning systems.
5. solar water heating systems.
6. fire and lawn sprinkler systems.
7. private waste disposal systems.

B. determine:

1. whether water supply and waste disposal systems are public or private.
2. water supply quantity or quality

C. operate automatic safety controls or manual stop valves.

7. ELECTRICAL

7.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. service drop.
2. service entrance conductors, cables, and raceways.
3. service equipment and main disconnects.
4. service grounding.
5. interior components of service panels and sub panels.
6. conductors.
7. overcurrent protection devices.
8. a representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles.
9. ground fault circuit interrupters.

B. describe:

1. amperage and voltage rating of the service.
2. location of main disconnect(s) and sub panels.
3. presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring.
4. presence or absence of smoke detectors.
5. wiring methods.

7.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect:

1. remote control devices.
2. alarm systems and components.
3. low voltage wiring systems and components.
4. the ancillary wiring systems and components not a part of the primary electrical power distribution system.

B. measure amperage, voltage, or impedance.

8. HEATING

8.1 The inspector shall:

A. open readily openable access panels.

B. inspect:

1. installed heating equipment.
2. vent systems, flues, and chimneys.

C. describe:

1. energy source(s).
2. heating systems.

8.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect:

1. interiors or flues or chimneys that are not readily accessible.
2. heat exchanger.
3. humidifiers or dehumidifiers.
4. electronic air filters.
5. solar space heating systems.

B. determine heat supply adequacy or distribution balance.

9. AIR CONDITIONING

9.1 The inspector shall:

A. open readily accessible access panels.

B. inspect:

1. central and through-wall cooling equipment.
2. distribution systems.

C. describe:

1. energy source(s)
2. cooling systems.

9.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect electronic air filters.

B. determine cooling supply adequacy or distribution balance.

C. inspect window air-conditioning units.

10. INTERIOR

10.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. walls, ceilings, and floors.
2. steps, stairways, and railings.
3. countertops and a representative number of installed cabinets.
4. a representative number of doors and windows.
5. garage doors and garage door operators.

10.2 The inspector is NOT required inspect:

- A. paint, wallpaper and other finish treatments.
 - B. carpeting.
 - C. window treatments.
 - D. central vacuum systems.
 - E. household appliances.
 - F. recreational facilities.
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11. INSULATION AND VENTILATION

11.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. insulation and vapour retarders in unfinished spaces.
2. ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
3. mechanical ventilation systems.

B. describe:

1. insulation and vapour retarders in unfinished spaces.
2. absence of insulation in unfinished spaces at conditioned surfaces.

11.2 The inspector is NOT required to disturb insulation.

See 13.2.A.11 and 13.2.A.12.

12. FIREPLACES AND SOLID FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES

12.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

1. system components.
2. chimney and vents.

B. describe:

1. fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances.
2. chimneys.

12.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect:

1. interiors of flues or chimneys.
2. firescreens and doors.
3. seals and gaskets.
4. automatic fuel feed devices.
5. mantles and fireplace surrounds.
6. combustion make-up air devices.

7. heat distribution assists (gravity fed and fan assisted).
- B. ignite or extinguish fires.
- C. determine draft characteristics.
- D. move fireplace inserts and stoves or firebox contents.

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13. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

13.1 General limitations:

A. The inspector is NOT required to perform any action or make any determination not specifically stated in these Standards of Practice.

B. Inspections performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice:

1. are not technically exhaustive
2. are not required to identify concealed conditions, latent defects, or consequential damage(s).

C. These Standards of Practice are applicable to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their garages or carports.

13.2 General exclusions:

A. Inspectors are NOT required to determine:

1. condition of systems or components that are not readily accessible.
2. remaining life expectancy of any system or component.
3. strength, adequacy, effectiveness, or efficiency of any system or component.
4. the causes of any condition or deficiency.
5. methods, materials, or costs of corrections.
6. future conditions including, but not limited to, failure of systems and components.
7. the suitability of the property for any specialized use.
8. compliance with regulatory requirements (codes, regulations, laws, ordinances, etc.).
9. market value of the property or its marketability.
10. the advisability of the purchase of the property.
11. the presence of potentially hazardous plants or animals including, but not limited to wood destroying organisms or diseases harmful to humans including molds or mold-like substances.
12. the presence of any environmental hazards including, but not limited to toxins, carcinogens, noise, and contaminants in soil, water and air.
13. the effectiveness of any system installed or methods utilized to control or remove suspected hazardous substances.
14. the operating costs of systems or components.
15. the acoustical properties of any system or component.
16. soil conditions relating to geotechnical or hydrologic specialties.

B. Inspectors are NOT required to offer:

1. or perform any act or service contrary to law.
2. or perform engineering services.
3. or perform work in any trade or any professional service other than home inspection.
4. warranties or guarantees of any kind.

C. Inspectors are NOT required to operate:

1. any system or component that is shut down or otherwise inoperable.
2. any system or component that does not respond to normal operating controls.
3. shut-off valves or manual stop valves.

D. Inspectors are NOT required to enter:

1. any area which will, in the opinion of the inspector, likely be dangerous to the inspector or other persons or damage the property or its systems or components.
2. the under-floor crawl spaces or attics that are not readily accessible.

E. Inspectors are NOT required to inspect:

1. underground items including, but not limited to underground storage tanks or other underground indications of their presence, whether abandoned or active.
2. items that are not installed.
3. installed decorative items.
4. items in areas that are not entered in accordance with 13.2.D.
5. detached structures other than garages and carports.
6. common elements or common areas in multi-unit housing, such as condominium properties or cooperative housing.

F. Inspectors are NOT required to:

1. perform any procedure or operation that will, in the opinion of the inspector, likely be dangerous to the inspector or other persons or damage the property or its systems or components.
2. describe or report on any system or component that is not included in these Standards and was not inspected.
3. move suspended ceiling tiles, personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice or debris.
4. dismantle any system or component, except as explicitly required by these Standards of Practice.

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14. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alarm Systems

Warning devices, installed or free-standing, including but not limited to smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, flue gas, and other spillage detectors, and security equipment.

Architectural Service

Any practice involving the art and science of building design for construction of any structure or grouping of structures and the use of space within and surrounding the structures or the design for construction, including but not specifically limited to, schematic design, design development, preparation of construction contract documents, and administration of the construction contract.

Automatic Safety Controls

Devices designed and installed to protect systems and components from unsafe conditions.

Component

A part of a system.

Decorative

Ornamental; not required for the proper operation of the essential systems and components of a home.

Describe

To identify (in writing) a system or component by its type or other distinguishing characteristics.

Dismantle

To take apart or remove any component, device or piece of equipment that would not be taken apart or removed by a homeowner in the course of normal and routine home owner maintenance.

Engineering

The application of scientific knowledge for the design, control, or use of building structures, equipment, or apparatus.

Engineering Service

Any professional or creative work requiring engineering education, training, and experience and the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical and engineering sciences to such professional service or creative work as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design and supervision of construction for the purpose of assuring compliance with the specifications and design, in conjunction with structures, buildings, machines, equipment, works or processes.

Further Evaluation

Examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman or service technician beyond that provided by the home inspection.

Home Inspection

The process by which an inspector visually examines the readily accessible systems and components of a home and which describes those systems and components in accordance with these Standards of Practice.

Household Appliances

Kitchen, laundry, and similar appliances, whether installed or free-standing.

Inspect

To examine any accessible systems or component of a building in accordance with these Standards of Practice, using normal operating controls and opening readily openable access panels.

Inspector

A person hired to examine any system or component of a building in accordance with these Standards of Practice.

Installed

Attached such that removal requires tools.

Normal Operating Controls

Devices such as thermostats, switches or valves intended to be operated by the homeowner.

Readily Accessible

Available for visual inspection without requiring moving of personal property, dismantling, destructive measures, or any action which will likely involve risk to persons or property.

Readily Openable Access Panel

A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that is readily accessible, within normal reach, can be removed by one person, and is not sealed in place.

Recreational Facilities

Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, exercise, entertainment, athletic, playground or other similar equipment and associated accessories.

Report

To communicate in writing.

Representative Number

One component per room for multiple similar interior components such as windows and electric receptacles; one component on each side of the building for multiple similar exterior components.

Roof Drainage Systems

Components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

Significantly Deficient

Unsafe or not functioning.

Shut Down

A state in which a system or component cannot be operated by normal operating controls.

Siding

Exterior wall covering and cladding; such as: aluminum, asphalt, brick, cement/asbestos, EIFS, stone, stucco, veneer, vinyl, wood, etc.

Solid Fuel Burning Appliances

A hearth and fire chamber or similar prepared place in which a fire may be built and which is built in conjunction with a chimney; or a listed assembly of a fire chamber, its chimney and related factory-made parts designed for unit assembly without requiring field construction.

Structural Component

A component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

System

A combination of interacting or interdependent components, assembled to carry out one or more functions.

Technically Exhaustive

An investigation that involves dismantling, the extensive use of advanced techniques, measurements, instruments, testing, calculations or other means.

Under-floor Crawl Space

The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the floor.

Unsafe

A condition in a readily accessible, installed system or component which is judged to be a significant risk of bodily injury during normal, day-to-day use. The risk may be due to damage, deterioration, improper installation or a change in accepted residential construction standards.

Wiring Methods

Identification of electrical conductors or wires by their general type, such as "non-metallic sheathed cable" ("Romex"), "armoured cable" ("bx") or "knob and tube," etc.

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