

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HOME INSPECTORS®

Standards of Practice

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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 include private, fee-paid 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 AND SCOPE

2.1 The purpose of these Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for private, fee-paid home *inspectors* who are members of the American Society of Home Inspectors. *Home inspections* performed to these Standards of Practice are intended to provide the client with information regarding the condition of the *systems* and *components* of the home as *inspected* at the time of the *Home Inspection*.

2.2 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

1. *readily accessible systems* and *components* of homes listed in these Standards of Practice.
2. *installed systems* and *components* of homes listed in these Standards of Practice.

B. *report*:

1. on those *systems* and *components inspected* which, in the professional opinion of the *inspector*, are *significantly deficient* or are near the end of their service lives.
2. A reason why, if not self-evident, the system or component is *significantly deficient* or near the end of its service life.
3. the *inspector's* recommendations to correct or monitor the *reported* deficiency.
4. on any *systems* and *components* designated for inspection in these Standards of Practice which were present at the time of the *Home Inspection* but were not *inspected* and the reason they were not *inspected*.

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

- A. including other inspection services, *systems* or *components* in addition to those required by these Standards of Practice.
- B. 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 SYSTEM

3.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

1. the *structural components* including 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.

B. *describe*:

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

3.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

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

4. EXTERIOR

4.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

1. the exterior wall covering, flashing and trim.
2. all exterior doors.
3. attached decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings.
4. the eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
5. the vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls on the property when any of these are likely to adversely affect the building.
6. walkways, patios, and driveways leading to dwelling entrances.

B. *describe* the exterior wall covering.

4.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

A. *inspect*:

1. screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.
2. fences.
3. geological, geotechnical, or hydrological conditions.
4. *recreational facilities*.
5. outbuildings.
6. seawalls, break-walls, and docks.
7. erosion control and earth stabilization measures.

5. ROOF SYSTEM

5.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

1. the roof covering.
2. the *roof drainage systems*.
3. the flashings.
4. the skylights, chimneys, and roof penetrations.

B. *describe* the roof covering and *report* the methods used to *inspect* the roof.

5.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

A. *inspect*:

1. antennae.
2. interiors of flues or chimneys which are not *readily accessible*.
3. other installed accessories.

6. PLUMBING SYSTEM

6.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

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

B. *describe*:

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

6.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

A. *inspect*:

1. the clothes washing machine connections.
2. the interiors of flues or chimneys which 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. the quantity or quality of the water supply.
3. operate safety valves or shut off valves.

7. ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

7.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

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

B. *describe*:

1. the amperage and voltage rating of the service
2. the location of main disconnect(s) and sub panels
3. the *wiring methods*

C. *report*:

1. on the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring
2. on the absence of smoke detectors

7.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

A. *inspect*:

1. the remote control devices unless the device is the only control device.
2. the *alarm systems* and *components*.
3. the 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 SYSTEM

8.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A. *inspect*:
 1. the *installed* heating equipment.
 2. the vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys.
- B. *describe*:
 1. the energy source.
 2. the heating method by its distinguishing characteristics.

8.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

- A. *inspect*:
 1. the interiors of flues or chimneys which are not *readily accessible*.
 2. the heat exchanger.
 3. the humidifier or dehumidifier.
 4. the electronic air filter.
 5. the solar space heating system.
- B. determine heat supply adequacy or distribution balance.

9. AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS

9.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A. *inspect* the *installed* central and through-wall cooling equipment.
- B. *describe*:
 1. the energy source.
 2. the cooling method by its distinguishing characteristics.

9.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

- A. *inspect* electronic air filters.
- B. determine cooling supply adequacy or distribution balance.

10. INTERIOR

10.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A. *inspect*:
 1. the walls, ceilings, and floors.
 2. the steps, stairways, and railings.
 3. the 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 to:

- A. *inspect*:
 1. the paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments.
 2. the carpeting.
 3. the window treatments.
 4. the central vacuum *systems*.
 5. the *household appliances*.
 6. *recreational facilities*.

11. INSULATION & VENTILATION

11.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A. *inspect*:
 1. the insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
 2. the ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
 3. the mechanical ventilation *systems*.
- B. *describe*:
 1. the insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
 2. the absence of insulation in unfinished spaces at conditioned surfaces.

11.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

- A. disturb insulation or vapor retarders.
- B. determine indoor air quality.

12. FIREPLACES AND SOLID FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES

12.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A. *inspect*:
 - 1. the system *components*.
 - 2. the vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys.
- B. *describe*:
 - 1. the fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances.
 - 2. the chimneys.

12.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

- A. *inspect*:
 - 1. the interiors of flues or chimneys.
 - 2. the fire screens and doors.
 - 3. the seals and gaskets.
 - 4. the automatic fuel feed devices.
 - 5. the mantles and fireplace surrounds.
 - 6. the combustion make-up air devices.
 - 7. the heat distribution assists whether gravity controlled or fan assisted.
- B. ignite or extinguish fires.
- C. determine draft characteristics.
- D. move fireplace inserts or stoves or firebox contents.

13. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

13.1 General limitations:

- A. Inspections performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice
 - 1. are not *technically exhaustive*.
 - 2. will not identify concealed conditions or latent defects
- B. These Standards of Practice are applicable to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their garages or carports.

13.2 General exclusions:

- A. The *inspector* is not required to perform any action or make any determination unless specifically stated in these Standards of Practice, except as may be required by lawful authority.
- B. *Inspectors* are NOT required to determine:
 - 1. the condition of *systems* or *components* which are not *readily accessible*.
 - 2. the remaining life of any system or component.
 - 3. the strength, adequacy, effectiveness, or efficiency of any system or component.
 - 4. the causes of any condition or deficiency.
 - 5. the 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. the 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.
 - 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.
- C. *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.
- D. *Inspectors* are NOT required to operate:
1. any system or component which is shut down or otherwise inoperable.
 2. any system or component which does not respond to *normal operating controls*.
 3. shut-off valves.
- E. *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 which do not conform to recognized standards for clearance.
- F. *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. *systems* or *components* which are not *installed*.
 3. *decorative items*.
 4. *systems* or *components* located in areas which are not entered in accordance with these Standards of Practice.
 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.
- G. *Inspectors* are NOT required to:
1. perform any procedure or operation 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. move suspended ceiling tiles, personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice, or debris.
 3. *dismantle* any *system* or *component*, except as explicitly required by these Standards of Practice.

GLOSSARY OF ITALICIZED WORDS

Alarm Systems

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

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 report a *system* or *component* by its type or other observed, significant characteristics to distinguish it from other *systems* or *components*

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 Service

Any professional service 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 readily accessible *systems* and *components* of a building in accordance with these Standards of Practice, using *normal operating controls* and opening *readily operable 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 Operable Access Panel

A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that is 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 outlets; 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*

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* which 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 component* or *system* which is judged to be a significant risk of personal 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"), "armored cable" ("bx") or "knob and tube," etc.