

**THE STANDARD OF PRACTICE FOR HOME INSPECTIONS AND
THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE HOME INSPECTION PROFESSION**



**AMERICAN
SOCIETY
OF HOME
INSPECTORS**

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HOME INSPECTION

Home inspections were being performed in the mid 1950s and by the early 1970s were considered by many consumers to be essential to the real estate transaction. The escalating demand was due to a growing desire by consumers to learn about the condition of a house prior to purchase. Meeting the expectations of consumers required a unique discipline, distinct from construction, engineering, architecture, or municipal building inspection. As such, home inspection requires its own set of professional guidelines and qualifications. The American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) formed in 1976 and established the ASHI Standard of Practice for Home Inspections and Code of Ethics to help buyers and sellers make real estate transaction decisions based on accurate information.

American Society of Home Inspectors

As the oldest and most respected organization of home inspectors in North America, ASHI takes pride in its position of leadership. Its Membership works to build public awareness of home inspection and to enhance the technical and ethical performance of home inspectors.

Standard of Practice for Home Inspections

The ASHI Standard of Practice for Home Inspections guides home inspectors in the performance of their inspections. Subject to regular review, the Standard of Practice for Home Inspections reflects information gained through surveys of conditions in the field and of the consumers' interests and concerns. Vigilance has elevated ASHI's Standard of Practice for Home Inspections so that today it is the most widely-accepted home inspection guideline and is recognized by many government and professional groups as the definitive standard for professional performance.

Code of Ethics for the Home Inspection Profession

ASHI's Code of Ethics stresses the home inspector's responsibility to report the results of the inspection in a fair, impartial, and professional manner, avoiding conflicts of interest.

ASHI Membership

Selecting the right home inspector can be as important as finding the right home. ASHI Certified Inspectors have performed no fewer than 250 fee-paid inspections in accordance with the ASHI Standard of Practice for Home Inspections. They have passed written examinations testing their knowledge of residential construction, defect recognition, inspection techniques, and report-writing, as well as ASHI's Standard of Practice for Home Inspections and Code of Ethics. Membership in the American Society of Home Inspectors is well-earned and maintained only through meeting requirements for continuing education.

Find local ASHI Inspectors by calling 1-800-743-2744 or visiting the ASHI Web site at www.ashi.org.

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ASHI STANDARD OF PRACTICE FOR HOME INSPECTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

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 AND SCOPE

2.1 The purpose of this document is to establish a minimum standard (Standard) for *home inspections* performed by *home inspectors* who subscribe to this Standard. *Home inspections* performed using this Standard are intended to provide the client with information about the condition of inspected *systems* and *components* at the time of the *home inspection*.

2.2 The *inspector* shall:

- A.** *inspect readily accessible*, visually observable, *installed systems* and *components* listed in this Standard.
- B.** provide the client with a written report, using a format and medium selected by the *inspector*, that states:
 - 1. 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 correction, the deficiencies reported in 2.2.B.1, or items needing *further evaluation* (Per Exclusion 13.2.A.5 the *inspector* is 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.B.1, that are not self-evident,
 - 4. those *systems* and *components* designated for inspection in this Standard that were present at the time of the *home inspection* but were not inspected and the reason(s) they were not inspected.
- C.** adhere to the ASHI® Code of Ethics for the Home Inspection Profession.

2.3 This Standard is not intended to limit the *inspector* from:

- A.** including other services or *systems* and *components* in addition to those required in Section 2.2.A.
- 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 or agreed to by the client.

3. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

3.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A.** *inspect structural components* including the foundation and framing.
- B.** *describe*:
 - 1. the methods used to inspect *under-floor crawlspaces* 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 *engineering* or architectural services or analysis.
- B.** offer an opinion about the adequacy of *structural systems* and *components*.
- C.** enter *under-floor crawlspace* areas that have less than 24 inches of vertical clearance between *components* and the ground or that have an access opening smaller than 16 inches by 24 inches.
- D.** traverse attic load-bearing *components* that are concealed by insulation or by other materials.

4. EXTERIOR

4.1 The *inspector* shall:

- A.** *inspect*:
 - 1. *wall coverings*, flashing, and trim.
 - 2. exterior doors.
 - 3. attached and 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 and entryway walkways, patios, and driveways.
- B.** *describe wall coverings*.

4.2 The inspector is NOT required to inspect:

- A. screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.
- B. fences, boundary walls, and similar structures.
- C. geological and 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. roof drainage systems.
- 3. flashing.
- 4. 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. antennas.
- B. interiors of vent systems, flues, and chimneys that are not readily accessible.
- C. other installed accessories.

6. PLUMBING

6.1 The inspector shall:

A. inspect:

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

B. describe:

- 1. interior water supply, drain, waste, and vent piping materials.
- 2. water heating equipment including 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 vent systems, flues, and chimneys that are not readily accessible.
- 3. wells, well pumps, and water storage related equipment.
- 4. water conditioning systems.
- 5. solar, geothermal, and other renewable energy water heating systems.
- 6. manual and automatic fire extinguishing and sprinkler systems and landscape irrigation systems.
- 7. septic and other sewage disposal systems.

B. determine:

- 1. whether water supply and sewage disposal are public or private.
- 2. water quality.
- 3. the adequacy of combustion air components.

C. measure water supply flow and pressure, and well water quantity.

D. fill shower pans and fixtures to test for leaks.

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 subpanels.
- 6. conductors.
- 7. overcurrent protection devices.
- 8. a representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles.
- 9. ground fault circuit interrupters and arc fault circuit interrupters.

B. describe:

1. amperage rating of the service.
2. location of main disconnect(s) and subpanels.
3. presence or absence of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
4. the predominant branch circuit wiring method.

7.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect:

1. remote control devices.
2. or test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, security systems, and other signaling and warning devices.
3. low voltage wiring systems and components.
4. ancillary wiring systems and components not a part of the primary electrical power distribution system.
5. solar, geothermal, wind, and other renewable energy systems.

B. measure amperage, voltage, and impedance.

C. determine the age and type of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.

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.
3. distribution systems.

C. describe:

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

8.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect:

1. interiors of vent systems, flues, and chimneys that are not readily accessible.
2. heat exchangers.
3. humidifiers and dehumidifiers.
4. electric air cleaning and sanitizing devices.
5. heating systems using ground-source, water-source, solar, and renewable energy technologies.
6. heat-recovery and similar whole-house mechanical ventilation systems.

B. determine:

1. heat supply adequacy and distribution balance.
2. the adequacy of combustion air components.

9. AIR CONDITIONING

9.1 The inspector shall:

A. open readily openable access panels.

B. inspect:

1. central and permanently installed cooling equipment.
2. distribution systems.

C. describe:

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

9.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. inspect electric air cleaning and sanitizing devices.

B. determine cooling supply adequacy and distribution balance.

C. inspect cooling units that are not permanently installed or that are installed in windows.

D. inspect cooling systems using ground-source, water-source, solar, and renewable energy technologies.

10. INTERIORS

10.1 The inspector shall inspect:

A. walls, ceilings, and floors.

B. steps, stairways, and railings.

C. countertops and a representative number of installed cabinets.

D. a representative number of doors and windows.

E. garage vehicle doors and garage vehicle door operators.

F. installed ovens, ranges, surface cooking appliances, microwave ovens, dishwashing machines, and food waste grinders by using normal operating controls to activate the primary function.

10.2 The inspector is NOT required to inspect:

A. paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments.

B. floor coverings.

C. window treatments.

D. coatings on and the hermetic seals between panes of window glass.

- E. central vacuum *systems*.
- F. recreational facilities.
- G. *installed* and free-standing kitchen and laundry appliances not listed in Section 10.1.F.
- H. appliance thermostats including their calibration, adequacy of heating elements, self cleaning oven cycles, indicator lights, door seals, timers, clocks, timed features, and other specialized features of the appliance.
- I. operate, or confirm the operation of every control and feature of an inspected appliance.

11. INSULATION AND VENTILATION

11.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

1. insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
2. ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
3. kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and similar exhaust *systems*.
4. clothes dryer exhaust *systems*.

B. *describe*:

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

11.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to disturb insulation.

12. FIREPLACES AND FUEL-BURNING APPLIANCES

12.1 The *inspector* shall:

A. *inspect*:

1. fuel-burning fireplaces, stoves, and fireplace inserts.
2. fuel-burning accessories *installed* in fireplaces.
3. chimneys and vent *systems*.

B. *describe systems* and *components* listed in 12.1.A.1 and .2.

12.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

A. *inspect*:

1. interiors of vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys that are not *readily accessible*.
2. fire screens and doors.
3. seals and gaskets.
4. automatic fuel feed devices.

5. mantles and fireplace surrounds.
 6. combustion air *components* and to determine their adequacy.
 7. heat distribution assists (gravity fed and fan assisted).
 8. fuel-burning fireplaces and appliances located outside the *inspected* structures.
- B. determine draft characteristics.
- C. move fireplace inserts and stoves or firebox contents.

13. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

13.1 General limitations

- A. The *inspector* is NOT required to perform actions, or to make determinations, or to make recommendations not specifically stated in this Standard.
- B. *Inspections* performed using this Standard:
1. are not *technically exhaustive*.
 2. are not required to identify and to report:
 - a. concealed conditions, latent defects, consequential damages, and
 - b. cosmetic imperfections that do not significantly affect a *component's* performance of its intended function.
- C. This Standard applies to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their attached and detached garages and carports.
- D. This Standard shall not limit or prevent the inspector from meeting state statutes which license professional home inspection and home inspectors.
- E. Redundancy in the description of the requirements, limitations, and exclusions regarding the scope of the *home inspection* is provided for emphasis only.

13.2 General exclusions

A. The *inspector* is NOT required to determine:

1. the condition of *systems* and *components* that are not *readily accessible*.
2. the remaining life expectancy of *systems* and *components*.
3. the strength, adequacy, effectiveness, and efficiency of *systems* and *components*.
4. the causes of conditions and deficiencies.
5. methods, materials, and costs of corrections.
6. future conditions including but not limited to failure of *systems* and *components*.
7. the suitability of the property for specialized uses.

8. compliance of *systems* and *components* with past and present requirements and guidelines (codes, regulations, laws, ordinances, specifications, installation and maintenance instructions, use and care guides, etc.).
9. the market value of the property and its marketability.
10. the advisability of purchasing the property.
11. the presence of plants, animals, and other life forms and substances that may be hazardous or harmful to humans including, but not limited to, wood destroying organisms, molds and mold-like substances.
12. the presence of environmental hazards including, but not limited to, allergens, toxins, carcinogens, electromagnetic radiation, noise, radioactive substances, and contaminants in building materials, soil, water, and air.
13. the effectiveness of *systems installed* and methods used to control or remove suspected hazardous plants, animals, and environmental hazards.
14. operating costs of *systems* and *components*.
15. acoustical properties of *systems* and *components*.
16. soil conditions relating to geotechnical or hydrologic specialties.
17. whether items, materials, conditions and *components* are subject to recall, controversy, litigation, product liability, and other adverse claims and conditions.

B. The *inspector* is NOT required to offer:

1. or to perform acts or services contrary to law or to government regulations.
2. or to perform architectural, *engineering*, contracting, or surveying services or to confirm or to evaluate such services performed by others.
3. or to perform trades or professional services other than *home inspection*.
4. warranties or guarantees.

C. The *inspector* is NOT required to operate:

1. *systems* and *components* that are shut down or otherwise inoperable.
2. *systems* and *components* that do not respond to *normal operating controls*.
3. shut-off valves and manual stop valves.
4. *automatic safety controls*.

D. The *inspector* is NOT required to enter:

1. areas that will, in the professional judgment of the *inspector*, likely be dangerous to the *inspector* or to other persons, or to damage the property or its *systems* and *components*.
2. *under-floor crawlspaces* and attics that are not *readily accessible*.

E. The *inspector* is NOT required to inspect:

1. underground items including, but not limited to, underground storage tanks and 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 and common areas in multi-unit housing, such as condominium properties and cooperative housing.
7. every occurrence of multiple similar *components*.
8. outdoor cooking appliances.

F. The *inspector* is NOT required to:

1. perform procedures or operations that will, in the professional judgment of the *inspector*, likely be dangerous to the *inspector* or to other persons, or to damage the property or its *systems* or *components*.
2. *describe* or report on *systems* and *components* that are not included in this Standard and that were not *inspected*.
3. move personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice, and debris.
4. *dismantle systems* and *components*, except as explicitly required by this Standard.
5. reset, reprogram, or otherwise adjust devices, *systems*, and *components* affected by *inspection* required by this Standard.
6. ignite or extinguish fires, pilot lights, burners, and other open flames that require manual ignition.
7. probe surfaces that would be damaged or where no deterioration is visible or presumed to exist.

14. GLOSSARY OF ITALICIZED TERMS

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* and *component* by its type or other distinguishing characteristics

Dismantle To take apart or remove *components*, devices, or pieces of equipment that would not be taken apart or removed by a homeowner in the course of normal maintenance

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

Further Evaluation Examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman, or service technician beyond that provided by a *home inspection*

Home Inspection The process by which an *inspector* visually examines the *readily accessible systems* and *components* of a home and *describes* those *systems* and *components* using this Standard

Inspect The process of examining *readily accessible systems* and *components* by (1) applying this Standard, and (2) operating *normal operating controls*, and (3) opening *readily openable access panels*

Inspector A person hired to examine *systems* and *components* of a building using this Standard

Installed Attached such that removal requires tools

Normal Operating Controls Devices such as thermostats, switches, and valves intended to be operated by the homeowner

Readily Accessible Available for visual inspection without requiring moving of personal property, dismantling, destructive measures, or actions that 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 opened by one person, and is not sealed in place

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

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

Shut Down A state in which a *system* or *component* cannot be operated by *normal operating controls*

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* that is judged by the *inspector* to be a significant risk of serious 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 practices

Wall Covering A protective or insulating layer fixed to the outside of a building such as: aluminum, brick, EIFS, stone, stucco, vinyl, and wood

Wiring Method Identification of electrical conductors or wires by their general type, such as non-metallic sheathed cable, armored cable, and knob and tube, etc.



ASHI[®] CODE OF ETHICS

For the Home Inspection Profession

Integrity, honesty, and objectivity are fundamental principles embodied by this Code, which sets forth obligations of ethical conduct for the home inspection profession. The Membership of ASHI has adopted this Code to provide high ethical standards to safeguard the public and the profession.

Inspectors shall comply with this Code, shall avoid association with any enterprise whose practices violate this Code, and shall strive to uphold, maintain, and improve the integrity, reputation, and practice of the home inspection profession.

1. Inspectors shall avoid conflicts of interest or activities that compromise, or appear to compromise, professional independence, objectivity, or inspection integrity.

- A. Inspectors shall not inspect properties for compensation in which they have, or expect to have, a financial interest.
- B. Inspectors shall not inspect properties under contingent arrangements whereby any compensation or future referrals are dependent on reported findings or on the sale of a property.
- C. Inspectors shall not directly or indirectly compensate realty agents, or other parties having a financial interest in closing or settlement of real estate transactions, for the referral of inspections or for inclusion on a list of recommended inspectors, preferred providers, or similar arrangements.
- D. Inspectors shall not receive compensation for an inspection from more than one party unless agreed to by the client(s).
- E. Inspectors shall not accept compensation, directly or indirectly, for recommending contractors, services, or products to inspection clients or other parties having an interest in inspected properties.
- F. Inspectors shall not repair, replace, or upgrade, for compensation, systems or components covered by ASHI Standards of Practice, for one year after the inspection.

2. Inspectors shall act in good faith toward each client and other interested parties.

- A. Inspectors shall perform services and express opinions based on genuine conviction and only within their areas of education, training, or experience.
- B. Inspectors shall be objective in their reporting and not knowingly understate or overstate the significance of reported conditions.
- C. Inspectors shall not disclose inspection results or client information without client approval. Inspectors, at their discretion, may disclose observed immediate safety hazards to occupants exposed to such hazards, when feasible.

3. Inspectors shall avoid activities that may harm the public, discredit themselves, or reduce public confidence in the profession.

- A. Advertising, marketing, and promotion of inspectors' services or qualifications shall not be fraudulent, false, deceptive, or misleading.
- B. Inspectors shall report substantive and willful violations of this Code to the Society.

