

# Standards of Practice

## The Professional Home and Property Inspectors of Canada

*Standards of Practice.* © Copyright 2006 American Society of Home Inspectors, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with Permission.

The Standards of Practice are a set of guidelines for home inspectors to follow in the performance of their inspections. They are the most widely accepted home inspection guidelines in use, and include all the home's major systems and components. The Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics are recognized by many related professionals as the definitive standard for professional performance in the industry. **(PHPIC) acknowledges The American Society of Home Inspectors®, Inc. (ASHI®) for the use of their Standards of Practice (version, 2006).**

### Index

1. Introduction
2. Purpose & Scope
3. Structural System
4. Exterior
5. Roof System
6. Plumbing System
7. Electrical System
8. Heating System
9. Air Conditioning System
10. Interior
11. Insulation & Ventilation
12. Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Burning Appliances
13. General Limitations and Exclusions

Glossary: Note: Italicized words are defined in the Glossary.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Professional Home and Property Inspectors of Canada (PHPIC) is a not-for-profit association whose member's objectives include the promotion of excellence within the profession and continual improvement of inspection services to the public.

### 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1 The purpose of the Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for home *inspectors* who are members of PHPIC. 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*.

### 2.2 Inspectors shall:

- A. adhere to the Code of Ethics of the Professional Home and Property Inspectors of Canada.*
- B. inspect readily accessible, visually observable, installed systems and components* of homes listed in these Standards of Practice.
- C. report:*
  - 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.
  - recommendations to correct, or monitor for future correction, 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.)

- reasoning or explanation as to the nature of the deficiencies reported in 2.2.C.1, that are not self-evident.
- 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:

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

## 3. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

### 3.1 The *inspector* shall:

#### A. *inspect:*

- the *structural components* including foundation and framing.
- 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:*

- the methods used to *inspect* the *under-floor crawl space*.
- the foundation
- the floor structure.
- the wall structure.
- the ceiling structure.
- the roof structure

### 3.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

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

## 4. EXTERIOR

### 4.1 The *inspector* shall:

#### A. *inspect:*

- siding, flashing and trim.
- all exterior doors.
- attached decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings.
- the eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
- the vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls on the property when any of these are likely to adversely affect the building.
- adjacent or entryway walkways, patios, and driveways.

#### B. *describe:*

- Siding.

### 4.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to inspect:

- screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.

# Standards of Practice – con't...

---

- 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. *roof drainage systems*.
3. flashings.
8. 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 which 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 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.
3. location of main water and main fuel shut-off valves.

### 6.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to inspect:

#### A. Inspect

1. clothes washing machine connections.
2. 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. 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. 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.
2. heating systems.

### 8.2 The *inspector* is NOT required to:

#### A. *inspect*:

1. interiors of flues or chimneys which are not *readily accessible*.
2. heat exchanger.
3. humidifier or dehumidifier.
4. electronic air filter.
5. *solar space heating system*.

- B. determine heat supply adequacy or distribution balance.

## 9. AIR CONDITIONING

### 9.1 The *inspector* shall:

#### A. open readily openable access panels.

#### B. *inspect*

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

#### B. describe:

1. energy source
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.

# Standards of Practice – con't...

---

## 10. INTERIORS

### 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 to inspect:

#### A. inspect:

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

## 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. mechanical ventilation *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.

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.

## 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. conditions of *systems* or *components* which are not *readily accessible*.
2. remaining life of any *system* or *component*.
3. strength, adequacy, effectiveness, or efficiency of any *system* or *component*.
4. 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 purchase of the property.
11. 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. operating costs of *systems* or *components*.
15. 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* which is *shut down* or otherwise inoperable.
2. any *system* or *component* which 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. under-floor crawl spaces or attics which 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.

## Standards of Practice – con't...

---

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 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. describe or report on any system or component that is not included in these Standards and was not inspected.
3. move 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.

## **GLOSSARY:**

### **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 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 freestanding

### **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 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 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 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 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.