

Attic

Only visible and accessible areas of the attic are inspected. Most of the attic is usually inaccessible due to limited clearance; insulation; storage; few (usually none) decked areas to walk on (doing other-wise may cause damage to the structure, utility components, or insulation; or personal injury); blockage by framing components, equipment, or utility lines; or dangerous or unsafe conditions, such as an excessive number of loose wires or roofing debris left in the attic during the most recent re-roofing. There is always the possibility that problems or defects were present but not visible in areas that were not visible or accessible; concealed or non-visible problems are not within the scope of the property inspection.

Any area or item covered by insulation, such as gas lines, electrical components, recessed lighting fixtures, etc., are not visible and are not inspected since removal and re-distribution of insulation is not within the scope of the inspection. Additionally, there are some areas that are simply too small to crawl to or negotiate, particularly at the perimeters of the structure. Storage in the attic can also prevent a complete visual inspection of areas that may otherwise be visible. These areas where stored items are kept may become visible when the current owners move out, exposing conditions that normally would be noted in your property inspection report but that were not visible or accessible at the time of inspection.

The attic has two main functions: (1) creating an insulating barrier between the living area and the roof, thereby helping to maintain interior temperatures; and (2) providing air flow to help prevent the roof covering from getting too hot. This is why roof coverings on some cathedral ceilings and other types of roofs sometimes don't last as long as the manufacturer said they would—there is no attic. Attics are inherently dangerous areas of the house and can become extremely hot during certain periods of the day, possibly causing heat stroke or other health problems if a person is in the attic too long. You should never enter the attic alone or when other people are not present in the house.

If you are buying a condominium or other common area property that shares walls with surrounding units, there should be a fire wall between the units and in any attic. I cannot verify the presence of a properly constructed fire wall for interior walls; lack of a fire wall in the attic would be noted. A fire can move very rapidly through the attic if a proper fire wall is not present, or if there are gaps around pipe or wire penetrations, or at framing junctions.

Helpful Links:

http://www.southface.org/web/resources&services/publications/factsheets/25_insulateceilings_4pdf.pdf

