

Standards of Practice

A general home inspection is a non-invasive, visual examination of the accessible areas of a residential property (as delineated below), performed for a fee, providing the client with a written report using a format and medium selected by the inspector, designed to identify defects within specific systems and components defined by these Standards that are both observed and deemed material by the inspector. The scope of work may be modified by the Client and Inspector prior to the inspection process. The general home inspection is based on the observations made on the date of the inspection and not a prediction of future conditions. The inspection will not reveal every issue that exists or ever could exist, but only those observed on the date of the inspection. The report shall identify, in written format, defects within specific systems and components defined by these Standards that are both observed and deemed material by the inspector. Inspection reports may include additional comments and recommendations. An inspection is not technically exhaustive, will not identify concealed or latent defects, will not deal with aesthetic concerns or what could be deemed matters of taste, cosmetic defects; will not determine the suitability of the property for any use; does not determine the market value of the property or its marketability, insurability of the property, advisability or inadvisability of the purchase of the inspected property; does not determine the life expectancy of the property or any components or systems therein; does not include items not permanently installed. This SOP applies only to properties with four or fewer residential units and their attached garages and carports. The inspector is not required to determine the property boundary lines or encroachments, condition of any component or system that is not readily accessible; service life expectancy of any component or system; size, capacity, BTU, performance or efficiency of any component or system; cause or reason of any condition; cause for the need of correction, repair or replacement of any system or component or future conditions; compliance with codes or regulations; current or previous presence of evidence of rodents, birds, bats, animals, insects, or other pests including feces, urine, or nesting; presence of mold, mildew or fungus; presence of airborne hazards, including radon or the air quality; the existence of environmental hazards, including lead paint, asbestos or toxic drywall; existence of electromagnetic fields; hazardous waste conditions; manufacturers' recalls or conformance with manufacturer installation or any information included for consumer protection purposes; acoustical properties; correction, replacement or repair cost estimates; estimates of the cost to operate any given system. The inspector is not required to operate any system that is shut down, does not function properly or evaluate low-voltage electrical systems, such as, but not limited to phone lines, cable lines, satellite dishes, antennae, lights, or remote controls; any system that does not turn on with the use of normal operating controls; any shut-off valves, manual stop valves, electrical disconnect or over-current protection devices, alarm systems, moisture meters, gas detectors, outdoor cooking appliances or similar equipment. The inspector is not required to move any personal items or other obstructions, such as, but not limited to throw rugs, carpeting, wall coverings, furniture, ceiling tiles, window coverings, equipment, plants, ice, debris, snow, water, dirt, pets, or anything else that might restrict the visual inspection; dismantle, open or uncover any system or component; enter or access any area that may be unsafe; enter crawlspaces or other areas that may be unsafe or not readily accessible; inspect underground items, such as, but not limited to lawn-irrigation systems, or underground storage tanks or indications of their presence, whether abandoned or actively used; do anything that may, in the inspector's opinion, be unsafe or dangerous or damage property, such as, but not limited to walking on roof surfaces, climbing ladders, entering attic spaces or negotiating with pets; inspect decorative items, common elements or areas in multi-unit housing, intercoms, speaker systems or security systems; offer guarantees or warranties or perform any engineering services, trade or professional service other than general home inspection; research the history of the property, or report on its potential for alteration, modification, extendibility or suitability for a specific or proposed use for occupancy; determine the age of construction or installation of any system, structure or component of a building, or differentiate between original construction and subsequent additions, improvements, renovations or replacements; determine the insurability of a property; perform or offer Phase One or environmental audits; inspect any system or component that is not included in these Standards. Operation, inspection or offer of opinion in the inspection report that are excluded from the SOP's shall not do so in a careless or misleading manner.

Exterior: From ground level, eaves or with use of a drone, the inspector shall inspect the roof-covering materials, gutters, downspouts, vents, flashing, skylights, chimney, and other roof penetrations and the general structure of the roof from the readily accessible panels, doors, or stairs. The inspector shall describe the type of roof-covering material and shall report as in need of correction the observed indications of active roof leaks. The inspector is not required to walk on any roof surface; predict the service life expectancy; inspect underground downspout diverter drainage pipes; remove snow, ice, debris or other conditions that prohibit the observation of the roof surfaces; move insulation; inspect antennae, satellite dishes, lightning arresters, de-icing equipment, or similar attachments; walk on any roof areas that appears to be unsafe or may cause damage; perform a water test; warrant or certify the roof; confirm proper fastening or installation of any roof-covering material. The inspector shall inspect the exterior wall-covering materials, flashing and trim, all exterior doors, adjacent walkways and driveways, stairs, steps, stoops, stairways, ramps, porches, patios, attached and adjacent decks, balconies, carports, railings, guards, handrails, eaves, soffits and fascia, a representative number of windows, vegetation, surface drainage, retaining walls and grading of the property where they may adversely affect the structure due to moisture intrusion. The inspector shall describe the type of exterior wall-covering materials. The inspector shall report as in need of correction any improper spacing between intermediate balusters, spindles, and rails. The inspector is not required to inspect or operate screens, storm windows, shutters, awnings, fences, outbuildings, exterior accent lighting; items that are not visible or readily accessible from the ground including window and door flashing; inspect or identify geological, geotechnical, hydrological or soil conditions; inspect recreational facilities or playground equipment, seawalls, break-walls, docks, erosion-control or earth-stabilization measures; determine presence of safety-type glass, underground utilities, items, wells or springs; solar, wind or geothermal systems; swimming pools or spas; wastewater treatment systems, septic systems or cesspools; irrigation or sprinkler systems; drain-fields or dry wells; determine the integrity of multiple-pane window glazing or thermal window seals.

Structural: The inspector shall inspect the foundation, basement, crawlspace, and structural components and shall describe the type of foundation and the location of the access to the under-floor space. The inspector shall report as in need of correction observed indications of wood in contact with or near soil; active water penetration; possible foundation movement such as sheetrock cracks, brick cracks, out-of-square door frames and unlevel floors; cutting, notching, and boring of framing members that may present a structural or safety concern. The inspector is not required to enter any crawlspace less than 24" in height, through an access point less than 16" by 24" or is not readily accessible or where entry could cause damage or pose a hazard; move stored items or debris; operate sump pumps with inaccessible floats; identify the size, spacing, span or location or determine the adequacy

of foundation bolting, bracing, joists, joist spans or support systems; provide any engineering or architectural service; report on the adequacy of any structural system or component.

Heating and Cooling: The inspector shall inspect the heating system using normal operating controls and shall describe the location of the thermostat for the heating system, energy source and the heating method. The inspector shall report as in need of correction any heating system that did not operate and if the heating system was deemed inaccessible. The inspector is not required to inspect or evaluate the interior of flues or chimneys, fire chambers, heat exchangers, combustion air systems, fresh-air intakes, humidifiers, dehumidifiers, electronic air filters, geothermal systems, or solar heating systems; fuel tanks both above and underground or concealed fuel supply systems; determine the uniformity, temperature, flow, balance, distribution, size, capacity, BTU, or supply adequacy of the heating system; light or ignite pilot flames; activate heating, heat pump systems or other heating systems when ambient temperatures or other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment; override electronic thermostats; evaluate fuel quality; verify thermostat calibration; heat anticipation or automatic setbacks, timers, programs or clocks. The inspector shall inspect the cooling system, using normal operating controls; describe the location of the thermostat for the cooling system and the cooling method; shall report as in need of correction any cooling system that did not operate and if the cooling system was deemed inaccessible. The inspector is not required to determine or inspect the uniformity, temperature, flow, balance, distribution, size, capacity, BTU, or supply adequacy of the cooling system; portable window units, through-wall units, or electronic air filters; operate equipment or systems if the exterior temperature is below 60° Fahrenheit or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment; thermostat calibration, cooling anticipation, automatic setbacks or clocks; electrical current; coolant fluids, gases or coolant leakage.

Plumbing: The inspector shall inspect the main water supply shut-off valve and main fuel supply shut-off valve; water heating equipment including the energy source; venting connections; temperature pressure-relief valves, Watts 210 valves and seismic bracing; interior water supply including all fixtures and faucets by running the water; flushing all toilets for proper operation; all sinks, tubs and showers for functional drainage; drain, waste and vent system; drainage sump pumps with accessible floats. The inspector shall describe whether the water supply is public or private based upon observed evidence; locations of the main water supply shut-off valve, main fuel supply shut-off valve and fuel-storage system; the capacity of the water heating equipment if labeled. The inspector shall report as in need of correction deficiencies in the water supply by viewing the functional flow in two fixtures operated simultaneously; deficiencies in the installation of hot and cold water faucets; mechanical drain stops that were missing or did not operate in installed sinks, lavatories, and tubs; toilets that were damaged, loose to the floor, leaking or had tank components that did not operate. The inspector is not required to light or ignite pilot flames; measure the capacity, temperature, age, life expectancy or adequacy of the water heater; inspect the interior of flues or chimneys; combustion air systems; water softener or filtering systems; well pumps or tanks; safety or shut-off valves; floor drains, lawn sprinkler systems, or fire sprinkler systems; determine the exact flow rate, volume, pressure, temperature, adequacy of the water supply, water quality, potability or reliability of the water supply or source; open sealed plumbing access panels; inspect clothes washing machines or their connections; operate any valve, test shower pans, tub and shower surrounds or enclosures for leakage or functional overflow protection; evaluate the compliance with conservation, energy or building standards or the proper design or sizing of any water, waste or venting components, fixtures or piping; determine the effectiveness of anti-siphon, back-flow prevention or drain-stop devices; determine whether there are sufficient clean-outs for effective cleaning of drains; evaluate fuel storage tanks or supply systems; inspect wastewater treatment systems, water treatment systems or water filters; water storage tanks, pressure pumps, or bladder tanks; evaluate wait time to obtain hot water at fixtures or perform testing of any kind to water heater elements; evaluate or determine the adequacy of combustion air; test, operate, open or close safety controls; manual stop valves, temperature/pressure-relief valves, control valves, or check valves; examine ancillary or auxiliary systems or components, such as, but not limited to, those related to solar water heating and hot water circulation; determine the existence or condition of polybutylene plumbing; inspect or test for gas or fuel leaks or indications thereof.

Electrical: The inspector shall inspect the service drop; the overhead service conductors and attachment point; the service head, gooseneck and drip loops; the service mast, service conduit and raceway; the electric meter and base; service-entrance conductors; the main service disconnect; panel boards and over-current protection devices (circuit breakers and fuses); service grounding and bonding; a representative number of switches, lighting fixtures and receptacles, including receptacles observed and deemed to be arc-fault circuit interrupter protected using the AFCI test button, where possible; all ground-fault circuit interrupter receptacles and circuit breakers observed and deemed to be GFCIs using a GFCI tester, where possible; and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. The inspector shall describe the main service disconnect amperage rating, if labeled and the type of wiring observed. The inspector shall report as in need of correction deficiencies in the integrity of the service entrance conductors' insulation, drip loop, and vertical clearances from grade and roofs; any unused circuit breaker panel opening that was not filled; the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch-circuit wiring, if readily visible; any tested receptacle in which power was not present, polarity was incorrect, the cover was not in place, the GFCI devices were not properly installed or did not operate properly, evidence of arcing or excessive heat and where the receptacle was not grounded or was not secured to the wall; and the absence of smoke detectors. The inspector is not required to insert any tool, probe or device into the main panel board, subpanels, distribution panel boards, or electrical fixtures; operate electrical systems that are shut inspect exterior lighting, down; remove panel board cabinet covers or dead front; operate or re-set overcurrent protection devices or overload devices; operate or test smoke or carbon-monoxide detectors or alarms; inspect, operate or test any security, fire or alarms systems or components, or other warning or signaling systems; measure or determine the amperage or voltage of the main service equipment, if not visibly labeled; inspect ancillary wiring or remote-control devices; activate any electrical systems or branch circuits that are not energized; inspect low-voltage systems, electrical de-icing tapes, swimming pool wiring, or any time- controlled devices; verify the service ground; inspect private or emergency electrical supply sources, including, but not limited to generators, windmills, photovoltaic solar collectors, or battery or electrical storage facility; inspect spark or lightning arrestors; inspect or test de-icing equipment; conduct voltage-drop calculations; determine the accuracy of labeling.

Fireplaces and Chimneys: The inspector shall inspect readily accessible and visible portions of the fireplaces and chimneys; lintels above the fireplace openings; damper doors by opening and closing them, if readily accessible and manually operable; and clean-

out doors and frames. The inspector shall describe the type of fireplace. The inspector shall report as in need of correction evidence of joint separation, damage or deterioration of the hearth, hearth extension or chambers; manually operated dampers that did not open and close; the lack of a smoke detector in the same room as the fireplace; the lack of a carbon-monoxide detector in the same room as the fireplace; and clean-outs not made of metal, pre-cast cement, or other non-combustible material. The inspector is not required to inspect the flue or vent system; inspect the interior of chimneys or flues, fire doors or screens, seals or gaskets, or mantels; determine the need for a chimney sweep; operate gas fireplace inserts; light pilot flames; determine the appropriateness of any installation; inspect automatic fuel-fed devices; inspect combustion and/or make-up air devices; inspect heat-distribution assists, whether gravity- controlled or fan-assisted; ignite or extinguish fires, determine the adequacy of drafts or draft characteristics, move fireplace inserts, stoves or firebox contents; perform a smoke test; dismantle or remove any component; perform a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)-style inspection; perform a Phase I fireplace and chimney inspection.

Insulation and Ventilation: The inspector shall inspect insulation in unfinished spaces, including attics, crawlspaces and foundation areas; ventilation of unfinished spaces, including attics, crawlspaces and foundation areas; and mechanical exhaust systems in the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry area; inspector shall describe the type of insulation observed; and the approximate average depth of insulation observed at the unfinished attic floor area or roof structure. The inspector shall report as in need of correction the general absence of insulation or ventilation in unfinished spaces. The inspector is not required to enter the attic or any unfinished spaces that are not readily accessible, or where entry could cause damage or, in the inspector's opinion, pose a safety hazard; move, touch or disturb insulation; move, touch or disturb vapor retarders; break or otherwise damage the surface finish or weather seal on or around access panels or covers; identify the composition or R-value of insulation material; activate thermostatically operated fans; determine the types of materials used in insulation or wrapping of pipes, ducts, jackets, boilers or wiring; determine the adequacy of ventilation.

Interior: The inspector shall inspect a representative number of doors and windows by opening and closing them; floors, walls and ceilings; stairs, steps, landings, stairways and ramps; counters, cabinets and drawers; installed ovens, ranges, surface cooking appliances, microwave ovens, dishwashing machines, and food waste grinders by using normal operating controls to activate the primary function; railings, guards and handrails; and garage vehicle doors and the operation of garage vehicle door openers, using normal operating controls. The inspector shall describe a garage vehicle door as manually operated or installed with a garage door opener. The inspector shall report as in need of correction improper spacing between intermediate balusters, spindles and rails for steps, stairways, guards, and railings; photo-electric safety sensors that did not operate properly; and any window that was obviously fogged or displayed other evidence of broken seals. The inspector is not required to inspect paint, wallpaper, window treatments or finish treatments; inspect floor coverings, carpeting, central vacuum systems; inspect for safety glazing; inspect security systems or components; evaluate the fastening of islands, sink tops or fixtures; move furniture, stored items, or any coverings, such as carpets or rugs, in order to inspect the concealed floor structure; move suspended-ceiling tiles; inspect or move any household appliances; inspect or operate equipment housed in the garage, except as otherwise noted; verify or certify the proper operation of any pressure-activated auto-reverse or related safety feature of a garage door; operate or evaluate any security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including their compliance with local, state or federal standards; operate any system, appliance or component that requires the use of special keys, codes, combinations or devices; operate or evaluate self-cleaning oven cycles, tilt guards/latches, or signal lights; inspect microwave ovens or test leakage from microwave ovens; operate or examine any sauna, steam- generating equipment, kiln, toaster, ice maker, coffee maker, can opener, bread warmer, blender, instant hot-water dispenser, or other small, ancillary appliances or devices; inspect elevators, remote controls, appliances and items not permanently installed; discover firewall compromises; inspect pools, spas or fountains; determine the adequacy of whirlpool or spa jets, water force, or bubble effects; determine the structural integrity or leakage of pools or spas.