

Standards of Practice

SUBPART 197-5 STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR HOME INSPECTORS

Section 197-5.1 Definitions

- (a) **Alarm Systems:** means installed or freestanding warning devices including, but not limited to, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, flue gas and other spillage detectors and security equipment.
- (b) **Central Air Conditioning:** means a system that uses either ducts to distribute cooled and/or dehumidified air to more than one room of a residential building or pipes to distribute chilled water to heat exchangers in more than one room in a residential building, and which is not plugged into an electrical convenience outlet.
- (c) **Component:** means a readily accessible and observable aspect of a system such as a floor or a wall, but not individual pieces such as boards or nails where many similar pieces make up the component.
- (d) **Dangerous or Adverse Situations:** means situations that pose a threat of injury to the home inspector including, but not limited to, those situations in which the home inspector is required to use special protective clothing or other safety equipment.
- (e) **Decorative:** means a component or part thereof that is ornamental and not required for the proper operation of the essential systems and components of a home.
- (f) **Dismantle:** means to take apart or remove any component, device, or piece of equipment that is bolted, screwed, or fastened and that a homeowner in the course of normal household maintenance would not dismantle.
- (g) **Engineering, Practice of:** means as that term is defined in Education Law, title VIII, Article 145, Section 7201.
- (h) **Engineering Study:** means a study requiring engineering services.
- (i) **Functional Drainage:** means the operation of a drain whereby a drain empties in a reasonable amount of time and does not overflow when another fixture is drained simultaneously.
- (j) **Functional Flow:** means a reasonable flow at the highest fixture in a dwelling when another fixture is operated simultaneously.
- (k) **Further Evaluation:** means the examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman, or service technician beyond that provided by the home inspection.

(l) Household Appliances: means kitchen and laundry appliances, room air conditioners, and similar appliances.

(m) Inspect: means to visually examine any system or component of a building in accordance with these Standards of Practice, using normal operating controls and opening readily operable access panels.

(n) Installed: means attached or connected such that the installed item requires tools for removal.

(o) Normal Operating Controls: means homeowner operated devices such as a thermostat, wall switch, or safety switch.

(p) Observable: means able to be observed at the time of the inspection without the removal of covering, fixed, finished and or stored materials.

(q) Observe: means the act of making a visual examination.

(r) On-site Water Supply Quantity: means the volume of water that is available for domestic use.

(s) Operate: means to cause systems or equipment to function.

(t) Primary Windows and Doors: means windows and exterior doors that are designed to remain in their respective openings year-round.

(u) Readily Accessible: means available for visual inspection without requiring the home inspector to remove or dismantle any personal property, use destructive measures, or take any action which will likely involve risk to persons or property.

(v) Readily Operable Access Panel: means a panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance, which has removable or operable fasteners or latch devices in order to be lifted, swung open, or otherwise removed by one person, and its edges and fasteners are not painted in place. The panel must be within normal reach and not blocked by stored items, furniture or building components.

(w) Recreational Facilities: means spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other entertainment or athletic facilities.

(x) Report: means a written document setting forth findings of home inspection unless otherwise specified in these regulations.

(y) Representative Number: means for multiple identical components such as windows and electrical outlets, one such component per room. For multiple identical exterior components this term shall mean one such component on each side of the building.

(z) Roof Drainage Systems: means gutters, down spouts, leaders, splash blocks, and similar components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

(aa) Safe Access: means access free of any encumbrances, hazardous materials, health and safety hazards such as climbing and/or standing on other than the ground and/or floor which may jeopardize the inspector.

(bb) Safety Glazing: means tempered glass, laminated glass or rigid plastic.

(cc) Shut Down: means a piece of equipment or a system is shut down when the device or control cannot be operated in a manner that a homeowner would normally use to operate it. If the safety switch or circuit breaker is in the "off" position, or the fuse is missing or blown, the inspector is not required to reestablish the circuit for the purpose of operating the equipment or system.

(dd) Solid Fuel Heating Device: means any wood, coal, or other similar organic fuel burning device including, but not limited to, fireplaces whether masonry or factory built, fireplace inserts and stoves, wood stoves (room heaters), central furnaces, and any combination of these devices.

(ee) Structural Component: means a component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

(ff) System: means a combination of interacting or interdependent components, assembled to carry out one or more functions.

(gg) Technically Exhaustive: means an inspection is technically exhaustive when it involves the extensive use of measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, and other means to develop scientific or engineering findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

(hh) Under Floor Crawl Space: means the area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the lowest floor structural component.

(ii) Unsafe: means a condition in a readily accessible, installed system or component, which is judged by the Home Inspector to be of 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 the accepted residential construction standard.

(jj) Water Supply Quality: means the quality of a residential building's water supply based on the bacterial, chemical, mineral, and solids content of the water.

Section 197-5.2 Purpose and Scope

(a) These Standards of Practice establish a minimum and uniform standard for home inspectors. Home inspections shall be performed in compliance with these Standards of Practice and shall provide the client with objective information regarding the condition

of the systems and components of the residential building as observed at the time of the home inspection.

(b) These Standards of Practice are not intended to limit home inspectors from including other inspection services or from observing and reporting upon systems and components not required by these Standards of Practice.

(c) The home inspection report shall clearly identify the systems and components of the residential building that were observed. If a home inspector is providing a home inspection that does not meet the minimum requirements as set forth in this Standards of Practice, the home inspection report must describe the scope of work, the services provided and the systems and components that are included and excluded in the inspection.

Section 197-5.3 Minimum Requirements

(a) Home inspectors shall observe and report on readily accessible, visually observable installed systems and components as set forth in these Standards of Practice.

(b) Home inspectors shall report on those systems and components observed that, in the professional opinion of the home inspector, are deficient, not functioning properly and/or unsafe.

(c) If a home inspector has not observed a particular system or major component, he or she shall list said item in the inspection report as an item that was not observed and shall set forth the reasons why said item was not observed.

Section 197-5.4 Site Conditions

(a) Home inspectors shall observe and report the following site conditions:

1. The building perimeter for land grade and water drainage directly adjacent to the foundation;
2. Trees and vegetation that adversely affect the residential building;
3. Walkways, steps, driveways, patios and retaining walls.

(b) Home inspectors are not required to observe and report on the following site conditions:

1. Fences and privacy walls;
2. The health and condition of trees, shrubs and other vegetation.

Section 197-5.5 Structural Systems

(a) Home inspectors shall observe and report on the following:

1. Any deteriorated and/or damaged structural component including the building foundation and framing;
2. The floor structure;

3. The wall structure;
4. The ceiling structure;
5. The roof structure.

Section 197-5.6 Exterior

- (a) Home inspectors shall observe and report on:
 1. All exterior walls and coverings, flashing and trim;
 2. All exterior doors including garage doors and operators;
 3. All attached or adjacent decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches and railings;
 4. All eaves, soffits and fascias where accessible from the ground level;
 5. All adjacent walkways, patios and driveways on the subject property;
 6. The condition of a representative number of windows.
- (b) Home inspectors are not required to observe and report on the following:
 1. Screening, shutters, awnings and other seasonal accessories;
 2. Fences;
 3. Geological and/or soil conditions;
 4. Recreational facilities;
 5. Out-buildings other than garages and carports;
 6. Tennis courts, jetted tubs, hot tubs, swimming pools, saunas and similar structures that would require specialized knowledge or test equipment;
 7. Erosion control and earth stabilization measures;
 8. The operation of security locks, devices or systems;
 9. The presence of safety-type glass or the integrity of thermal window seals or damaged glass.

Section 197-5.7 Roof Systems

- (a) Home inspectors shall observe and report on readily accessible:
 1. Roofing materials and condition;
 2. Roof drainage systems;
 3. Flashing;
 4. Skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations.
- (b) The home inspector shall report on the methods used to observe the roof and other components set forth in this section.
- (c) All home inspection reports shall describe the observed condition and type of roofing materials and shall describe the methods used to observe the roofing.
- (d) Home inspectors are not required to observe and report on:
 1. Antennas, lightening arresters or similar attachments;
 2. Any flue or chimney interior that is not readily accessible;
 3. Other installed accessories.

- (e) Home inspectors are not required to operate powered roof ventilators.
- (f) Home inspectors are not required to determine the remaining life expectancy of roof coverings, manufacturers' defects, installation methods or recalls or to determine the number of roof layers present.
- (g) Home inspectors are not required to walk on or access a roof where to do so could result in damage to the roof or roofing material or endanger the health and safety of the home inspector.

Section 197-5.8 Plumbing System

- (a) Home inspectors shall observe and report on the following visibly and readily accessible components, systems and conditions:
 - 1. Interior water supply and distribution systems including fixtures and faucets;
 - 2. Drain, waste and vent systems;
 - 3. Water heating equipment and vents and pipes;
 - 4. Fuel storage and fuel distribution systems and components;
 - 5. Drainage sumps, sump pumps, ejector pumps and related piping;
 - 6. Active leaks.
- (b) In inspecting plumbing systems and components, home inspectors shall operate all readily accessible:
 - 1. Fixtures and faucets;
 - 2. Domestic hot water systems;
 - 3. Drain pumps and waste ejectors pumps;
 - 4. The water supply at random locations for functional flow;
 - 5. Waste lines from random sinks, tubs and showers for functional drainage;
- (c) Home inspectors are not required to:
 - 1. Operate any main, branch or fixture valve, except faucets, or to determine water temperature;
 - 2. Observe and report on any system that is shut down or secured;
 - 3. Observe and report on any plumbing component that is not readily accessible;
 - 4. Observe and report on any exterior plumbing component or system or any underground drainage system;
 - 5. Observe and report on fire sprinkler systems;
 - 6. Evaluate the potability of any water supply;
 - 7. Observe and report on water conditioning equipment including softener and filter systems;
 - 8. Operate freestanding or built in appliances;
 - 9. Observe and report on private water supply systems;
 - 10. Test shower pans, tub and shower surrounds or enclosures for leakage;
 - 11. Observe and report on gas supply system for materials, installation or leakage;
 - 12. Evaluate the condition and operation of water wells and related pressure tanks and pumps; the quality or quantity of water from on-site water supplies or the condition and operation of on-site sewage disposal systems such as cesspools, septic tanks, drain

fields, related underground piping, conduit, cisterns and equipment;

13. Observe, operate and report on fixtures and faucets if the flow end of the faucet is connected to an appliance;

14. Record the location of any visible fuel tank on the inspected property that is not within or directly adjacent to the structure;

15. Observe and report on any spas, saunas, hot-tubs or jetted tubs;

16. Observe and report on any solar water heating systems.

(d). Home inspections shall describe the water supply, drain, waste and vent piping materials; the water heating equipment including capacity, and the energy source and the location of the main water and main fuel shut-off valves. In preparing a report, home inspectors shall state whether the water supply and waste disposal systems are a public, private or unknown.

Section 197-5.9 Electrical System

(a). Home inspectors shall observe and report upon readily accessible and observable portions of:

1. Service drop;

2. Service entrance conductors, cables and raceways;

3. The main and branch circuit conductors for property over current protection and condition by visual observation after removal of the readily accessible main and sub electric panel covers;

4. Service grounding;

5. Interior components of service panels and sub-panels;

6. A representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles;

7. A representative number of ground fault circuit interrupters.

(b). Home inspections shall describe readily accessible and observable portions of:

1. Amperage and voltage rating of the service;

2. The location of main dis-connects and sub-panels;

3. The presence of aluminum branch circuit wiring;

4. The presence or absence of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors;

5. The general condition and type of visible branch circuit conductors that may constitute a hazard to the occupant or the residential building by reason of improper use or installation of electrical components.

(c). Home inspectors are not required to:

1. Observe and report on remote control devices;

2. Observe and report on alarm systems and components;

3. Observe and report on low voltage wiring systems and components such as doorbells and intercoms;

4. Observe and report on ancillary wiring systems and components which are not a part of the primary electrical power distribution system;

5. Insert any tool, probe or testing device into the main or sub-panels;

6. Activate electrical systems or branch circuits which are not energized;

7. Operate overload protection devices;
8. Observe and report on low voltage relays, smoke and/or heat detectors, antennas, electrical de-icing tapes, lawn sprinkler wiring, swimming pool wiring or any system controlled by timers;
9. Move any object, furniture or appliance to gain access to any electrical component;
10. Test every switch, receptacle and fixture;
11. Remove switch and outlet cover plates;
12. Observe and report on electrical equipment not readily accessible;
13. Dismantle any electrical device or control;
14. Measure amperage, voltage or impedance;
15. Observe and report on any solar powered electrical component or any standby emergency generators or components.

Section 197-5.10 Heating System

- (a). Home inspectors shall:
 1. Describe the type of fuel, heating equipment and heating distribution system;
 2. Operate the systems using thermostats;
 3. Open readily accessible and operable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance;
 4. Observe and report on the condition of normally operated controls and components of the systems;
 5. Observe and report on visible flue pipes, dampers and related components for functional operation;
 6. Observe and report on the presence of and the condition of a representative number of heat sources in each habitable space of the residential building;
 7. Observe and report on the operation of fixed supplementary heat units;
 8. Observe and report on visible components of vent systems, flues and chimneys;
- (b). Home inspectors are not required to:
 1. Activate or operate the heating systems that do not respond to the thermostats or have been shut down;
 2. Observe, evaluate and report on heat exchangers;
 3. Observe and report on equipment or remove covers or panels that are not readily accessible;
 4. Dismantle any equipment, controls or gauges;
 5. Observe and report on the interior of chimney flues;
 6. Observe and report on heating system accessories, such as humidifiers, air purifiers, motorized dampers and heat reclaimers;
 7. Activate heating, heat pump systems or any other system when ambient temperatures or other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment;
 8. Evaluate the type of material contained in insulation and/or wrapping of pipes, ducts, jackets and boilers;
 9. Evaluate the capacity, adequacy or efficiency of a heating or cooling system;
 10. Test or operate gas logs, built-in gas burning appliances, grills, stoves, space

heaters or solar heating devices or systems;

11. Determine clearance to combustibles or adequacy of combustion air;
12. Test for gas leaks or carbon monoxide;
13. Observe and report on in-floor and in-ceiling radiant heating systems.

Section 197-5.11 Air Conditioning Systems

(a). Home inspectors shall:

1. Observe, describe and report on the type of air conditioning equipment and air conditioning distribution system;
2. Operate the system using the thermostat;
3. Open a representative number of readily accessible and operable access panels provided by the manufacturer for routine homeowner maintenance;
4. Observe and report on the condition of normally operated controls and components of the system.

(b). Home inspectors are not required to:

1. Activate or operate air conditioning systems that have been shut down;
2. Observe and report on gas-fired refrigeration systems, evaporative coolers, or wall or window-mounted air conditioning units;
3. Check the pressure of the system coolant or determine the presence of leakage;
4. Evaluate the capacity, efficiency or adequacy of the system;
5. Operate equipment or systems if exterior temperature is below 65 degrees Fahrenheit or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage equipment;
6. Remove covers or panels that are not readily accessible or that are not part of routine homeowner maintenance;
7. Dismantle any equipment, controls or gauges;
8. Check the electrical current drawn by the unit;
9. Observe and report on electronic air filters.

Section 197-5.12 Interior

(a). Home inspectors shall:

1. Observe and report on the material and general condition of walls, ceilings and floors;
2. Observe and report on steps, stairways and railings;
3. Observe, operate and report on garage doors, garage door safety devices and garage door operators;
4. Where visible and readily accessible, observe and report on the bath and/or kitchen vent fan ducting to determine if it exhausts to the exterior of the residential building;
5. Observe, operate and report on a representative number of primary windows and interior doors;
6. Observe and report on visible signs of water penetration.

- (b). Home inspectors are not required to:
1. Ignite fires in a fireplace or stove to determine the adequacy of draft, perform a chimney smoke test or observe any solid fuel device in use;
 2. Evaluate the installation or adequacy of inserts, wood burning stoves or other modifications to a fireplace, stove or chimney;
 3. Determine clearance to combustibles in concealed areas;
 4. Observe and report on paint, wallpaper or other finish treatments;
 5. Observe and report on window treatments;
 6. Observe and report on central vacuum systems;
 7. Observe and report on household appliances;
 8. Observe and report on recreational facilities;
 9. Observe and report on lifts, elevators, dumbwaiters or similar devices.

Section 197-5.13 Insulation and Ventilation

- (a). Home inspectors shall:
1. Observe, describe and report on insulation in accessible, visible unfinished spaces;
 2. Observe, describe and report on ventilation of accessible attics and foundation areas;
 3. Observe and report on mechanical ventilation systems in visible accessible areas.
- (b). Home inspectors are not required to:
1. Disturb insulation;
 2. Operate mechanical ventilation systems when weather or other conditions are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.

Section 197-5.14 Fireplaces

- (a). Home inspectors shall:
1. Observe and report on visible and accessible system components;
 2. Observe and report on visible and accessible chimneys and vents;
 3. Observe and report on chimney caps;
 4. Observe and report on fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances;
 5. Observe and report on chimneys;
 6. Observe, operate and report on accessible fireplace dampers.
- (b). Home inspectors are not required to:
1. Observe and report on the interiors of flues or chimneys;
 2. Observe and report on fire screens and doors;
 3. Observe and report on automatic fuel feed devices;
 4. Observe and report on mantles and fireplace surrounds;
 5. Observe and report on combustion make-up air devices;
 6. Observe and report on heat distribution assists;
 7. Ignite or extinguish fires;

8. Determine draft characteristics;
9. Move fireplace inserts and stoves or firebox contents.

Section 197-5.15 Attics

- (a). Home inspectors shall observe and report on any safe and readily accessible attic space describing:
 1. The method of observation used; and
 2. Conditions observed.
- (b). Home inspectors are not required to enter any attic where no walkable floor is present or where entry would, in the opinion of the home inspector, be unsafe.

Section 197-5.16 Limitations and Exclusions

- (a). Home inspectors are not required to observe any item that is concealed or not readily accessible to the home inspector. The home inspector is not required to move furniture, personal or stored items; lift floor coverings; move attached wall or ceiling coverings or panels; or perform any test or procedure which could damage or destroy the item being evaluated.
- (b). Home inspectors are not required to observe appliances, recreational facilities, alarm systems, intercoms, speaker systems, radio controlled devices, security devices and lawn irrigation systems.
- (c). Home inspectors shall not be required to determine the presence or absence of any suspected hazardous substance including but not limited to, latent surface and/or subsurface volatile organic compounds, PCB's, asbestos, urea formaldehyde insulation, toxins, carcinogens, diseases, wood destroying organisms, mold, hazardous plants, illicit drugs or drug making equipment, lead paint, noise or contaminants in soil, water, air quality, wet lands or any other environmental hazard.
- (d). Except as otherwise necessary and required by this Standards of Practice, home inspectors are not required to use special instruments or testing devices, such as amp meters, pressure gauges, moisture meters, gas detectors and similar equipment.
- (e). Home inspectors are not required to report on real property, geological, environmental or hazardous waste conditions, manufacturer recalls or conformance of proper manufacturer installation of any component or system, or information contained in Consumer Protection Bulletins. Home inspectors are not required to report upon past or present violations of codes, ordinances or regulations.
- (f). Home inspectors are not required to provide an inspection of any condominium common component or system, or to evaluate condominium reserve accounts.
- (g). Home inspectors are not required to enter any residential building or area of a building that, in the opinion of the home inspector, is dangerous to the safety of the

home inspector or others or that will result in damage to the property, its systems or components.

(h). Home inspectors shall not be required to enter any area or perform any procedure which, in the opinion of the home inspector, may damage the property or its components.

(i). Home inspectors shall not be required to observe any system or component that is not included in this Standards of Practice.

(j). Home inspections performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice are not technically exhaustive and are not required to identify concealed conditions, latent defects or consequential damages.

(k). Home inspectors are not required to determine:

1. Conditions of systems or components that are not readily accessible;
2. The remaining life expectancy 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. The future condition of a system or component including, but not limited to, the failure of the system and/or components;
7. The suitability of the property for any specialized use;
8. The advisability of purchase of the property;
9. The 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;
10. The presence of any environmental hazard including, but not limited to, toxins, carcinogens, noise, and contaminants in soil, water and air;
11. The effectiveness of any system installed or method utilized to control or remove suspected hazardous substances;
12. Operating costs of systems of components;
13. Acoustical properties of any system or component;
14. Soil conditions related to geo-technical or hydrologic specialties.

(l). Home inspectors are not required to offer:

1. To perform work in any trade or profession other than home inspection;
2. Warranties or guarantees of any kind.

(m). Home inspectors are not required to operate:

1. Any system or component that is shut down or otherwise inoperable;
2. Any system or component that does not respond to normal operating controls and shall not be required to dismantle any system or component, except as explicitly required by these Standards of Practice;
3. Shut off valves or manual stop valves;
4. Any system or component that, in the opinion of the home inspector, is

dangerous to the home inspector or other persons, or will result in damage to the residential building, its systems or its components.

(n). Home inspectors are not required to observe:

1. Concealed spaces or components or underground items including, but not limited to, underground storage tanks or other underground indications of their presence, whether abandoned or otherwise;
2. Items that have not been installed;
3. Installed decorative items;
4. Items that are not entered in accordance with subdivision 15 of this section;
5. Detached structures other than garages and carports.

(o). Home inspectors shall not be required to describe or report on any system or component that is not included in these Standards of Practice and was not inspected.

(p). Home inspectors shall not be required to move personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice or debris.

(q). These Standards of Practice are not intended to limit home inspectors from excluding systems and components from the home inspection if requested by the client.

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1. Definitions and Scope

1.1. A Home inspection is a non-invasive visual examination of a residential dwelling, performed for a fee, which is designed to identify observed material defects within specific components of said dwelling. Components may include any combination of mechanical, structural, electrical, plumbing, or other essential systems or portions of the home, as identified and agreed to by the Client and Inspector, prior to the inspection process.

I. A home inspection is intended to assist in evaluation of the overall condition of the dwelling. The inspection is based on observation of the visible and apparent condition of the structure and its components on the date of the inspection and not the prediction of future conditions.

II. A home inspection will not reveal every concern that exists or ever could exist, but only those material defects observed on the day of the inspection.

1.2. A Material defect is a condition with a residential real property or any portion of it that would have a significant adverse impact on the value of the real property or that involves an unreasonable risk to people on the property. The fact that a structural element, system or subsystem is near, at or beyond the end of the normal useful life of such a structural element, system or subsystem is not by itself a material defect.

1.3. An Inspection report shall describe and identify in written format the inspected systems, structures, and components of the dwelling and shall identify material defects observed. Inspection reports may contain recommendations regarding conditions reported or recommendations for correction, monitoring or further evaluation by professionals, but this is not required.

2. Standards of Practice

2.1. Roof

I. The inspector shall inspect from ground level or eaves:

- A. The roof covering.
- B. The gutters.
- C. The downspouts.
- D. The vents, flashings, skylights, chimney and other roof penetrations.
- E. The general structure of the roof from the readily accessible panels, doors or stairs.

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Walk on any roof surface.
- B. Predict the service life expectancy.
- C. Inspect underground downspout diverter drainage pipes.
- D. Remove snow, ice, debris or other conditions that prohibit the observation of the roof surfaces.
- E. Inspect antennae, lightning arresters, or similar attachments.

2.2. Exterior

I. The inspector shall inspect:

- A. The siding, flashing and trim.
- B. All exterior doors, decks, stoops, steps, stairs, porches, railings, eaves, soffits and fascias.
- C. And report as in need of repair any spacings between intermediate balusters, spindles, or rails for steps, stairways, balconies, and railings that permit the passage of an object greater than four inches in diameter.
- D. A representative number of windows.
- E. The vegetation, surface drainage and retaining walls when these are likely to adversely affect the structure.
- F. And describe the exterior wall covering.

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Inspect or operate screens, storm windows, shutters, awnings, fences, outbuildings, or exterior accent lighting.
- B. Inspect items, including window and door flashings, which are not visible or readily accessible from the ground.
- C. Inspect geological, geotechnical, hydrological and/or soil conditions.
- D. Inspect recreational facilities.
- E. Inspect seawalls, break-walls and docks.
- F. Inspect erosion control and earth stabilization measures.
- G. Inspect for safety type glass.
- H. Inspect underground utilities.
- I. Inspect underground items.
- J. Inspect wells or springs.
- K. Inspect solar systems.
- L. Inspect swimming pools or spas.
- M. Inspect septic systems or cesspools.
- N. Inspect playground equipment.
- O. Inspect sprinkler systems.
- P. Inspect drain fields or drywells.
- Q. Determine the integrity of the thermal window seals or damaged glass.

2.3. Basement, Foundation & Crawlspace

I. The inspector shall inspect:

- A. The basement.
- B. The foundation
- C. The crawlspace.
- D. The visible structural components.
- E. Any present conditions or clear indications of active water penetration observed by the inspector.
- F. And report any general indications of foundation movement that are observed by the inspector, such as but not limited to sheetrock cracks, brick cracks, out-of-square door frames or floor slopes.

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Enter any crawlspaces that are not readily accessible or where entry could cause damage or pose a hazard to the inspector.
- B. Move stored items or debris.
- C. Operate sump pumps with inaccessible floats.
- D. Identify size, spacing, span, location or determine adequacy of foundation bolting, bracing, joists, joist spans or support systems.
- E. Provide any engineering or architectural service.
- F. Report on the adequacy of any structural system or component.

2.4. Heating

I. The inspector shall inspect:

- A. The heating systems using normal operating controls and describe the energy source and heating method.
- B. And report as in need of repair heating systems which do not operate.
- C. And report if inspector deemed the heating systems inaccessible

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Inspect or evaluate interiors of flues or chimneys, fire chambers, heat exchangers, humidifiers, dehumidifiers, electronic air filters, solar heating systems or fuel tanks.
- B. Inspect underground fuel tanks.
- C. Determine the uniformity, temperature, flow, balance, distribution, size, capacity, BTU, or supply adequacy of the heating system.
- D. Light or ignite pilot flames.
- E. Activate heating, heat pump systems, or other heating systems when ambient temperatures or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.
- F. Override electronic thermostats.
- G. Evaluate fuel quality.
- H. Verify thermostat calibration, heat anticipation or automatic setbacks, timers, programs or clocks.

2.5. Cooling

I. The inspector shall inspect:

A. The central cooling equipment using normal operating controls.

II. The inspector is not required to:

A. Determine the uniformity, temperature, flow, balance, distribution, size, capacity, BTU, or supply adequacy of the cooling system.

B. Inspect window units, through-wall units, or electronic air filters.

C. Operate equipment or systems if exterior temperature is below 60 degrees Fahrenheit or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.

D. Inspect or determine thermostat calibration, heat anticipation or automatic setbacks or clocks.

E. Examine electrical current, coolant fluids or gases, or coolant leakage.

2.6. Plumbing

I. The inspector shall:

A. Verify the presence of and identify the location of the main water shutoff valve.

B. Inspect the water heating equipment, including combustion air, venting, connections, energy sources, seismic bracing, and verify the presence or absence of temperature-pressure relief valves and/or Watts 210 valves.

C. Flush toilets.

D. Run water in sinks, tubs, and showers.

E. Inspect the interior water supply including all fixtures and faucets.

F. Inspect the drain, waste and vent systems, including all fixtures.

G. Describe any visible fuel storage systems.

H. Inspect the drainage sump pumps testing sumps with accessible floats.

I. Inspect and describe the water supply, drain, waste and main fuel shut-off valves, as well as the location of the water main and main fuel shut-off valves.

J. Inspect and determine if the water supply is public or private.

K. Inspect and report as in need of repair deficiencies in the water supply by viewing the functional flow in two fixtures operated simultaneously.

L. Inspect and report as in need of repair deficiencies in installation and identification of hot and cold faucets.

M. Inspect and report as in need of repair mechanical drain-stops that are missing or do not operate if installed in sinks, lavatories and tubs.

N. Inspect and report as in need of repair commodes that have cracks in the ceramic material, are improperly mounted on the floor, leak, or have tank components which do not operate.

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Light or ignite pilot flames.
- B. Determine the size, temperature, age, life expectancy or adequacy of the water heater.
- C. Inspect interiors of flues or chimneys, water softening or filtering systems, well pumps or tanks, safety or shut-of valves, floor drains, lawn sprinkler systems or fire sprinkler systems.
- D. Determine the exact flow rate, volume, pressure, temperature, or adequacy of the water supply.
- E. Determine the water quality or potability or the reliability of the water supply or source.
- F. Open sealed plumbing access panels.
- G. Inspect clothes washing machines or their connections.
- H. Operate any main, branch or fixture valve.
- I. Test shower pans, tub and shower surrounds or enclosures for leakage.
- J. Evaluate the compliance with local or state conservation or energy standards, or the proper design or sizing of any water, waste or venting components, fixtures or piping.
- K. Determine the effectiveness of anti-siphon, back-flow prevention or drain-stop devices.
- L. Determine whether there are sufficient clean-outs for effective cleaning of drains.
- M. Evaluate gas, liquid propane or oil storage tanks.
- N. Inspect any private sewage waste disposal system or component of.
- O. Inspect water treatment systems or water filters.
- P. Inspect water storage tanks, pressure pumps or bladder tanks.
- Q. Evaluate time to obtain hot water at fixtures, or perform testing of any kind to water heater elements.
- R. Evaluate or determine the adequacy of combustion air.
- S. Test, operate, open or close safety controls, manual stop valves and/or temperature or pressure relief valves.
- T. Examine ancillary systems or components, such as, but not limited to, those relating to solar water heating, hot water circulation.
- U. Determine the existence or condition of polybutylene plumbing.

2.7. Electrical

I. The inspector shall inspect:

- A. The service line.
- B. The meter box.
- C. The main disconnect.
- D. And determine the rating of the service amperage.
- E. Panels, breakers and fuses.
- F. The service grounding and bonding.
- H. A representative number of switches, receptacles, light fixtures, AFCI receptacles
- I. And test all GFCI receptacles and GFCI circuit breakers observed and deemed to be GFCI's during the inspection.
- I. And report the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring if readily visible.
- J. And report on any GFCI-tested receptacles in which power is not present, polarity is

incorrect, the receptacle is not grounded, is not secured to the wall, the cover is not in place, the ground fault circuit interrupter devices are not properly installed or do not operate properly, or evidence of arcing or excessive heat is present.

K. The service entrance conductors and the condition of their sheathing.

L. The ground fault circuit interrupters observed and deemed to be GFCI's during the inspection with a GFCI tester.

M. And describe the amperage rating of the service.

N. And report the absence of smoke detectors.

O. Service entrance cables and report as in need of repair deficiencies in the integrity of the insulation, drip loop, or separation of conductors at weatherheads and clearances.

II. The inspector is not required to:

A. Insert any tool, probe or device into the main panel, sub-panels, downstream panels, or electrical fixtures.

B. Operate electrical systems that are shut down.

C. Remove panel covers or dead front covers if not readily accessible.

D. Operate over current protection devices.

E. Operate non-accessible smoke detectors.

F. Measure or determine the amperage or voltage of the main service if not visibly labeled.

G. Inspect the alarm system and components.

H. Inspect the ancillary wiring or remote control devices.

I. Activate any electrical systems or branch circuits which are not energized.

J. Operate overload devices.

K. Inspect low voltage systems, electrical de-icing tapes, swimming pool wiring or any time-controlled devices.

L. Verify the continuity of the connected service ground.

M. Inspect private or emergency electrical supply sources, including but not limited to generators, windmills, photovoltaic solar collectors, or battery or electrical storage facility.

N. Inspect spark or lightning arrestors.

O. Conduct voltage drop calculations.

P. Determine the accuracy of breaker labeling.

2.8. Fireplace

I. The inspector shall inspect:

A. The fireplace, and open and close the damper door if readily accessible and operable.

B. Hearth extensions and other permanently installed components.

C. And report as in need of repair deficiencies in the lintel, hearth and material surrounding the fireplace, including clearance from combustible materials

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Inspect the flue or vent system.
- B. Inspect the interior of chimneys or flues, fire doors or screens, seals or gaskets, or mantels.
- C. Determine the need for a chimney sweep.
- D. Operate gas fireplace inserts.
- E. Light pilot flames.
- F. Determine the appropriateness of such installation.
- G. Inspect automatic fuel feed devices.
- H. Inspect combustion and/or make-up air devices.
- I. Inspect heat distribution assists whether gravity controlled or fan assisted.
- J. Ignite or extinguish fires.
- K. Determine draft characteristics.
- L. Move fireplace inserts, stoves, or firebox contents.
- M. Determine adequacy of draft, perform a smoke test or dismantle or remove any component.
- N. Perform an NFPA inspection.

2.9. Attic, Ventilation & Insulation

I. The inspector shall inspect:

- A. The insulation in unfinished spaces.
- B. The ventilation of attic spaces.
- C. Mechanical ventilation systems.
- D. And report on the general absence or lack of insulation.

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Enter the attic or unfinished spaces that are not readily accessible or where entry could cause damage or pose a safety hazard to the inspector in his or her opinion.
- B. To move, touch, or disturb insulation.
- C. To move, touch or disturb vapor retarders.
- D. Break or otherwise damage the surface finish or weather seal on or around access panels and covers.
- E. Identify the composition of or the exact R-value of insulation material.
- F. Activate thermostatically operated fans.
- G. Determine the types of materials used in insulation/wrapping of pipes, ducts, jackets, boilers, and wiring.
- H. Determine adequacy of ventilation.

2.10. Doors, Windows & Interior

I. The inspector shall:

- A. Open and close a representative number of doors and windows.
- B. Inspect the walls, ceilings, steps, stairways, and railings.

- C. And report as in need of repair any spacings between intermediate balusters, spindles, or rails for steps, stairways, and railings that permit the passage of an object greater than four inches in diameter.
- D. Inspect garage doors and garage door openers by operating first by remote (if available) and then by the installed automatic door control.
- E. And report as in need of repair any installed electronic sensors that are not operable or not installed at proper heights above the garage door.
- F. And report as in need of repair any door locks or side ropes that have not been removed or disabled when garage door opener is in use.
- G. And report as in need of repair any windows that are obviously fogged or display other evidence of broken seals.

II. The inspector is not required to:

- A. Inspect paint, wallpaper, window treatments or finish treatments.
- B. Inspect central vacuum systems.
- C. Inspect safety glazing.
- D. Inspect security systems or components.
- E. Evaluate the fastening of countertops, cabinets, sink tops and fixtures, or firewall compromises.
- F. Move furniture, stored items, or any coverings like carpets or rugs in order to inspect the concealed floor structure.
- G. Move drop ceiling tiles.
- H. Inspect or move any household appliances..
- I. Inspect or operate equipment housed in the garage except as otherwise noted.
- J. Verify or certify safe operation of any auto reverse or related safety function of a garage door.
- K. Operate or evaluate security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including compliance with local, state, or federal standards.
- L. Operate any system, appliance or component that requires the use of special keys, codes, combinations, or devices.
- M. Operate or evaluate self-cleaning oven cycles, tilt guards/latches or signal lights.
- N. Inspect microwave ovens or test leakage from microwave ovens.
- O. Operate or examine any sauna, steam-jenny, kiln, toaster, ice-maker, coffee-maker, can-opener, bread-warmer, blender, instant hot water dispenser, or other small, ancillary devices.
- P. Inspect elevators.
- Q. Inspect remote controls.
- R. Inspect appliances.
- S. Inspect items not permanently installed.
- T. Examine or operate any above-ground, movable, freestanding, or otherwise non-permanently installed pool/spa, recreational equipment or self-contained equipment.
- U. Come into contact with any pool or spa water in order to determine the system structure or components.
- V. Determine the adequacy of spa jet water force or bubble effect.
- W. Determine the structural integrity or leakage of a pool or spa.

3. Limitations, Exceptions & Exclusions

3.1. Limitations:

- I. An inspection is not technically exhaustive.
- II. An inspection will not identify concealed or latent defects.
- III. An inspection will not deal with aesthetic concerns or what could be deemed matters of taste, cosmetic, etc.
- IV. An inspection will not determine the suitability of the property for any use.
- V. An inspection does not determine the market value of the property or its marketability.
- VI. An inspection does not determine the insurability of the property.
- VI. An inspection does not determine the advisability or inadvisability of the purchase of the inspected property.
- VIII. An inspection does not determine the life expectancy of the property or any components or systems therein.
- IX. An inspection does not include items not permanently installed.
- X. These Standards of Practice apply only to homes with four or fewer dwelling units.

3.2. Exclusions:

- I. The inspectors are not required to determine:
 - A. Property boundary lines or encroachments.
 - B. The condition of any component or system that is not readily accessible.
 - C. The service life expectancy of any component or system.
 - D. The size, capacity, BTU, performance, or efficiency of any component or system.
 - E. The cause or reason of any condition.
 - F. The cause for the need of repair or replacement of any system or component.
 - G. Future conditions.
 - H. The compliance with codes or regulations.
 - I. The presence of evidence of rodents, animals or insects.
 - J. The presence of mold, mildew or fungus.
 - K. The presence of air-borne hazards.
 - L. The presence of birds.
 - M. The presence of other flora or fauna.
 - N. The air quality.
 - O. The existence of asbestos.
 - P. The existence of environmental hazards.
 - Q. The existence of electro-magnetic fields.
 - R. The presence of hazardous materials including, but not limited to, the presence of

lead in paint.

S. Any hazardous waste conditions.

T. Any manufacturer recalls or conformance with manufacturer installation or any information included in the consumer protection bulletin.

U. Operating costs of systems.

V. Replacement or repair cost estimates.

W. The acoustical properties of any systems.

X. Estimates of how much it will cost to run any given system.

II. The inspectors are not required to operate:

A. Any system that is shut down.

B. Any system that does not function properly.

C. Or evaluate low voltage electrical systems such as, but not limited to:

1. Phone lines.

2. Cable lines.

3. Antennae.

4. Lights.

5. Remote controls.

D. Any system that does not turn on with the use of normal operating controls.

E. Any shut off valves or manual stop valves.

F. Any electrical disconnect or over current protection devices.

G. Any alarm systems.

H. Moisture meters, gas detectors or similar equipment.

III. The inspectors are not required to:

A. Move any personal items or other obstructions, such as, but not limited to:

1. Throw rugs.

2. Furniture.

3. Floor or wall coverings.

4. Ceiling tiles

5. Window coverings.

6. Equipment.

7. Plants.

8. Ice.

9. Debris.

10. Snow.

11. Water.

12. Dirt.

13. Foliage.

14. Pets

B. Dismantle, open, or uncover any system or component.

C. Enter or access any area which may, in the opinion of the inspector, to be unsafe or risk personal safety.

- D. Enter crawlspaces or other areas that are unsafe or not readily accessible.
- E. Inspect underground items such as, but not limited to, underground storage tanks or other indications of their presence, whether abandoned or actively used.
- F. Do anything which, in the inspector's opinion, is likely to be unsafe or dangerous to the inspector or others or damage property, such as, but not limited to, walking on roof surfaces, climbing ladders, entering attic spaces or negotiating with dogs.
- G. Inspect decorative items.
- H. Inspect common elements or areas in multi-unit housing.
- I. Inspect intercoms, speaker systems, radio-controlled, security devices or lawn irrigation systems.
- J. Offer guarantees or warranties.
- K. Offer or perform any engineering services.
- L. Offer or perform any trade or professional service other than home inspection.
- M. Research the history of the property, report on its potential for alteration, modification, extendibility, or its suitability for a specific or proposed use for occupancy.
- N. Determine the age of construction or installation of any system structure, or component of a building, or differentiate between original construction or subsequent additions, improvements, renovations or replacements thereto.
- O. Determine the insurability of a property.
- P. Perform or offer Phase 1 environmental audits.
- Q. Inspect on any system or component which is not included in these standards.

4. Glossary of Terms

4.1. Accessible: Can be approached or entered by the inspector safely, without difficulty, fear or danger.

4.2. Activate: To turn on, supply power, or enable systems, equipment, or devices to become active by normal operating controls. Examples include turning on the gas or water supply valves to the fixtures and appliances and activating electrical breakers or fuses.

4.3. Adversely Affect: Constitute, or potentially constitute, a negative or destructive impact.

4.4. Alarm System: 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.

4.5. Appliance: A household device operated by use of electricity or gas. Not included in this definition are components covered under central heating, central cooling or plumbing.

4.6. 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, design development, preparation of construction contract documents, and administration of the construction contract.

4.7. Component: A permanently installed or attached fixture, element or part of a system.

4.8. Condition: The visible and conspicuous state of being of an object.

4.9. Crawlspace: The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the lowest floor structural component.

4.10. Decorative: Ornamental; not required for the operation of essential systems and components of a home.

4.11. Describe: Report in writing a system or component by its type, or other observed characteristics, to distinguish it from other components used for the same purpose.

4.12. Determine: To arrive at an opinion or conclusion pursuant to examination.

4.13. Dismantle: To open, take apart or remove any component, device or piece that would not typically be opened, taken apart or removed by an ordinary occupant.

4.14. 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.

4.15. Enter: To go into an area to observe visible components.

4.16. Evaluate: To assess the systems, structures or components of a dwelling.

4.17. Examine: To visually look. See Inspect.

4.18. Foundation: The base upon which the structure or wall rests; usually masonry, concrete, or stone, and generally partially underground.

4.19. Function: The action for which an item, component, or system is specially fitted or used or for which an item, component or system exists; to be in action or perform a task.

4.20. Functional: Performing, or able to perform, a function.

4.21. Home Inspection: The process by which an inspector visually examines the readily accessible systems and components of a home and operates those systems and components utilizing these Standards of Practice as a guideline.

4.22. Household Appliances: Kitchen and laundry appliances, room air conditioners, and similar appliances.

4.23. Inspect: To visually look at readily accessible systems and components safely, using normal operating controls and accessing readily accessible panels and areas in accordance with these Standards of Practice.

4.24. Inspected Property: The readily accessible areas of the buildings, site, items, components, and systems included in the inspection.

4.25. Inspector: One who performs a real estate inspection.

4.26. Installed: Attached or connected such that the installed item requires tool for removal.

4.27. Material Defect: Refer to section 1.2.

4.28. Normal Operating Controls: Devices such as thermostats that would be operated by ordinary occupants which require no specialized skill or knowledge.

4.29. Observe: To see through visually directed attention.

4.30. Operate: To cause systems to function or turn on with normal operating controls.

4.31. Readily Accessible: An item or component is readily accessible if, in the judgment of the inspector, it is capable of being safely observed without movement of obstacles, detachment or disengagement of connecting or securing devices, or other unsafe or difficult procedures to gain access.

4.32. Recreational Facilities: Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment or athletic facilities.

4.33. Report: A written communication (possibly including digital images) of any material defects seen during the inspection.

4.34. Representative Number: A sufficient number to serve as a typical or characteristic example of the item(s) inspected.

4.35. Safety Glazing: Tempered glass, laminated glass, or rigid plastic.

4.36. Shut Down: Turned off, unplugged, inactive, not in service, not operational, etc.

4.37. Structural Component: A component which supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

4.38. System: An assembly of various components to function as a whole.

4.39. Technically Exhaustive: A comprehensive and detailed examination beyond the scope of a real estate home inspection which would involve or include, but would not be limited to: dismantling, specialized knowledge or training, special equipment, measurements, calculations, testing, research, analysis or other means.

4.40. 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.

4.41. Verify: To confirm or substantiate.