

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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To obtain additional copies or request permission to reprint The ASHI Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, contact:

**The American Society of Home Inspectors,  
Inc.<sup>1</sup>  
932 Lee Street, Suite 101  
Des Plaines, IL 60016  
800-743-ASHI/2744  
ashi.com**

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## Home Inspection

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

## American Society of Home Inspectors

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

## Standards of Practice

The ASHI Standards of Practice guide home inspectors in the performance of their inspections. Subject to regular review, the Standards of Practice reflect information gained through surveys of conditions in the field and the consumers' interests and concerns. Vigilance has elevated ASHI's Standards of Practice to the most widely-accepted home inspection guidelines in use and to be recognized by many government and professional groups as the definitive standards for professional performance.

## Code of Ethics

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

## ASHI Membership

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

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## Standards of Practice:

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) is a non-for-profit professional society established in 1976. Membership in ASHI is voluntary and its members include private, fee-paid home inspectors. ASHI's objectives include promotion of excellence within the professional and continual improvement of its members' inspection services to the public.

### 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1 The purpose of these Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for private, fee-paid home inspectors who are members of the American Society of Home Inspectors. Home Inspections performed to these Standards of Practice are intended to provide the client with information regarding the condition of the *systems* and *components* of the home as inspected at the time of the Home Inspection.

#### 2.2 The inspector shall:

##### A. *Inspect:*

1. *Readily accessible systems* and *components* of homes listed in these Standards of Practice.
2. *Installed systems* and *components* of homes listed in these Standards of Practice.

##### B. *Report:*

1. On those *systems* and *components* inspected which, in the professional opinion of the *inspector*, are *significantly deficient* or near the end of its service life.
2. A reason why, if not self-evidence, the *system* or *component* is *significantly deficient* or near the end of its service life.
3. The inspector's recommendations to correct or monitor the reported deficiency.
4. On any *systems* and *components* designated for inspection in these Standards of Practice which were present at the time of the *Home Inspection* but were not inspected and a reason they were not inspected.

#### 2.3 These Standards of Practice are not intended to limit inspectors from:

- A. Including other inspection services, *systems* or *components* in addition to those required by these Standards of Practice.
- B. Specifying repairs, provided the *inspector* is appropriately qualified and willing to do so.
- C. Excluding *systems* and *components* from the inspection if requested by the client.

### 3. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

#### 3.1 The Inspector shall:

##### A. *Inspect:*

1. The *structural components* including foundation and framing.
2. 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:*

1. The foundation and report the methods used to *inspect* the *under-floor crawl space*.
2. The floor structure.
3. The wall structure.
4. The ceiling structure.
5. The roof structure and *report* the methods used to *inspect* the attic.

#### 3.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

- A. Provide any *engineering service* or *architectural service*.
- B. Offer an opinion as to the adequacy of any *structural system* or *component*.

### 4. EXTERIOR

#### 4.1 The Inspector shall:

##### A. *Inspect:*

1. The exterior wall covering, flashing and trim.
2. All exterior doors.
3. Attached decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches and their associated railings.
4. The eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
5. The vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls on the property when any of these are likely to adversely affect the building.
6. Walkways, patios, and driveways leading to dwelling entrances.

##### B. *Describe* the exterior wall covering.

#### 4.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

##### A. *Inspect:*

1. Screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.
2. Fences.
3. Geological, geotechnical, or hydrological conditions.
4. *Recreational facilities*.
5. Outbuildings.
6. Seawalls, break-walls, and docks.
7. Erosion control and earth stabilization measures.

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## 5. ROOF SYSTEM

### 5.1 The Inspector shall:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The roof covering.
  2. The *roof drainage systems*.
  3. The flashings.
  4. The skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations.
- B. *Describe* the roof covering and *report* the methods used to *inspect* the roof.

### 5.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. Antennas.
  2. Interiors of flues or chimneys which are not *readily accessible*.
  3. Other *installed* accessories.

## 6. PLUMBING SYSTEM

### 6.1 The Inspector shall:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The interior water supply and distribution *systems* including all fixtures and faucets.
  2. The drain, waste and vent *systems* including all fixtures.
  3. The water heating equipment.
  4. The vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys.
  5. The fuel storage and fuel distribution *systems*.
  6. The drainage sump pumps, and related piping.
- B. *Describe:*
1. The water supply, drain, waste, and vent piping materials.
  2. The water heating equipment including the energy source.
  3. The location of main water and main fuel shut-off valves.

### 6.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The clothes washing machine connections.
  2. The interior 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. The quantity or quality of the water supply.
- C. Operate safety valves or shut-off valves.

## 7. ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

### 7.1 The Inspector shall:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The service drop.
  2. The service entrance conductors, cables and raceways.
  3. The service equipment and main disconnects.
  4. The service grounding
  5. The interior components of service panels and sub-panels.
  6. The conductors.
  7. The overcurrent protective devices.
  8. A *representative number* of *installed* lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles.
  9. The ground fault circuit interrupters.
- B. *Describe:*
1. The amperage and voltage rating of the service.
  2. The location of main disconnect(s) and sub-panels.
  3. The *wiring methods*.
- C. *Report:*
1. On the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring.
  2. On the absence of smoke detectors.

### 7.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The remote control devices unless the device is the only control device.
  2. The *alarm systems* and *components*.
  3. The low voltage wiring, *systems* and *components*.
  4. The ancillary wiring, *systems* and *components* not a party of the primary electrical power distribution *system*.
- B. Measure amperage, voltage or impedance.

## 8. HEATING SYSTEM

### 8.1 The Inspector shall:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The *installed* heating equipment.
  2. The vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys.
- B. *Describe:*
1. The energy source.
  2. The heating method by its distinguishing characteristics.

### 8.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

- A. *Inspect:*
1. The interior of flues or chimneys which are not *readily accessible*.
  2. The heat exchanger.
  3. The humidifier or dehumidifier.
  4. The electronic air filter.
  5. The solar space heating *system*.
- B. Determine heat supply adequacy or distribution balance.

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## 9. AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM

### 9.1 The Inspector shall:

A. *Inspect* the *installed* central and through-wall cooling equipment.

B. *Describe*:

1. The energy source.
2. The cooling method by its distinguishing characteristics.

### 9.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

A. *Inspect* electronic air filters.

B. Determine cooling system adequacy or distribution balance.

## 10. INTERIOR

### 10.1 The Inspector shall:

A. *Inspect*:

1. The walls, ceilings, and floors.
2. The steps, stairways, and railings.
3. The countertops and *representative number* of *installed* cabinets.
4. A *representative number* of doors and windows.
5. Garage doors and garage door openers.

### 10.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

A. *Inspect*:

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

## 11. INSULATION AND VENTILATION

### 11.1 The Inspector shall:

A. *Inspect*:

1. The insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
2. The ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
3. The mechanical ventilation *systems*.

B. *Describe*:

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

### 11.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

A. Disturb insulation or vapor retarders.

B. Determine indoor air quality.

## 12. FIREPLACES AND SOLID FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES

### 12.1 The Inspector shall:

A. *Inspect*:

1. The *system components*.
2. The vent *systems*, flues and chimneys.

B. *Describe*:

1. The fireplaces and *solid fuel burning appliances*.
2. The chimneys.

### 12.2 The Inspector is NOT required to:

A. *Inspect*:

1. The interiors of flues or chimneys.
2. The firescreens and doors.
3. The seals and gaskets.
4. The automatic fuel feed devices.
5. The mantles and fireplace surrounds.
6. The combustion make-up air devices.
7. The heat distribution assists whether gravity controlled or fan assisted.

B. Ignite or extinguish fires.

C. Determine draft characteristics.

D. Move fireplace inserts or stoves or firebox contents.

## 13. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

### 13.1 General Limitations:

A. Inspections performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice

1. Are not technically exhaustive.
2. Will not identify concealed conditions or latent defects.

B. These Standards of Practice are applicable to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their garages or carports.

### 13.2 General exclusions:

A. The *Inspector* is not required to perform any action or make any determination unless specifically stated in these Standards of Practice, except as may be required by lawful authority.

B. *Inspectors* are NOT required to determine:

1. The condition of *systems* or *components* which are not *readily accessible*.
2. The remaining life 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. 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. The market value of the property or its marketability.
10. The advisability of the purchase of the property.
11. The presence of potentially hazardous plants or animals including, but not limited to wood destroying organisms or diseases harmful to humans.

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS, 13.2 continued

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. The operating costs of *systems* or *components*.
  15. The acoustical properties of any *system* or *components*.
- C. *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.
- D. *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.
- E. *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. The *under-floor crawl spaces* or attics, which are not *readily accessible*.
- F. *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. *Systems* or *components* which are not *installed*.
  3. *Decorative items*.
  4. *Systems* or *components* located in areas that are not entered in accordance with these Standards of Practice.
  5. Detached structures other than garages and carports.
  6. Common elements or common areas in multi-unit housing, such as condominium properties or cooperative housing.
- G. *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. Move suspended ceiling tiles, personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice, or debris.
  3. *Dismantle* any *system* or *component*, except as explicitly required by these Standards of Practice.

## GLOSSARY OF ITALICIZED TERMS -

### *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 group 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 contractor 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 homeowner 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.

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## *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 free-standing.

## *Inspect*

To examine readily accessible systems and components of a building in accordance with those 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 involved 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 of 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 by 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 & tube", etc.