



# Canadian Association Of Home & Property Inspectors

## 2012 NATIONAL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The National Standards of Practice are a set of guidelines for home and property inspectors to follow in the performance of their inspections. They are the most widely accepted Canadian home inspection guidelines in use, and address all the home's major systems and components. The National Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics are recognized by many related professionals as the definitive Standards for professional performance in the industry.

These National Standards of Practice are being published to inform the public on the nature and scope of visual building inspections performed by home and property inspectors who are members of the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors (CAHPI).

The purpose of the National Standards of Practice is to provide guidelines for home and property inspectors regarding both the inspection itself and the drafting of the inspection report, and to define certain terms relating to the performance of home inspections to ensure consistent interpretation.

To ensure better public protection, home and property inspectors who are members of CAHPI should strive to meet these Standards and abide by the appropriate provincial/regional CAHPI Code of Ethics.

These Standards take into account that a visual inspection of a building does not constitute an evaluation or a verification of compliance with building codes, Standards or regulations governing the construction industry or the health and safety industry, or Standards and regulations governing insurability.

*Any terms not defined in these Standards shall have the meaning commonly assigned to it by the various trades and professions, according to context.*

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

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** The Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors (CAHPI) is a not-for-profit association whose members include the following seven provincial/regional organizations: CAHPI-British Columbia., CAHPI-Alberta, CAHPI-Saskatchewan, CAHPI-Manitoba, OAHI (Ontario), AIBQ (Quebec), and CAHPI-Atlantic. CAHPI strives to promote excellence within the profession and continual improvement of inspection services to the public.

## 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

**2.1** The purpose of these National Standards of Practice is to establish professional and uniform Standards for private, fee-paid home inspectors who are members of one of the provincial/regional organizations of CAHPI. Home Inspections performed to these National Standards of Practice are intended to provide information regarding the condition of the systems and components of the building as inspected at the time of the Home Inspection. This does NOT include building code inspections.

These National Standards of Practice enable the building being inspected to be compared with a building that was constructed in accordance with the generally accepted practices at the time of construction, and which has been adequately maintained such that there is no significant loss of *functionality*.

It follows that the building may not be in compliance with current building codes, standards and regulations that are applicable at the time of inspection.

These National Standards of Practice apply to inspections of part or all of a building for the following building types:

- single-family dwelling, detached, semi-detached or row house
- multi unit residential building
- residential building held in divided or undivided co ownership
- residential building occupied in part for a residential occupancy and in part for a commercial occupancy, as long as the latter use does not exceed 40% of the building's total area, excluding the basement.

## 2.2 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

### A. inspect:

1. *readily accessible*, visually observable *installed systems*, and *components* of buildings listed in these National Standards of Practice.

### B. report:

1. on those *systems* and *components* installed on the building inspected which, in the professional opinion or judgement of the *inspector*, *have a significant deficiency* or are unsafe or are near the end of their *service lives*.
2. a reason why, if not self-evident, the *system* or *component has a significant deficiency* or is unsafe or is 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 National 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 National Standards of Practice are not intended to limit inspectors from:*

- A. including other inspection services in addition to those required by these National Standards of Practice provided the *inspector* is appropriately qualified and willing to do so.
- B. excluding *systems* and *components* from the inspection if requested by the client or as dictated by circumstances at the time of the inspection.

## 3. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

### 3.1 GENERAL LIMITATIONS:

- A. Inspections performed in accordance with these National Standards of Practice
  1. are not *technically exhaustive*.
  2. will not identify concealed conditions or latent defects.

### 3.2 GENERAL EXCLUSIONS:

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

**B.** *Inspectors* are NOT required to determine:

1. condition of *systems* or *components* which are not *readily accessible*.
2. remaining life of any *system* or *component*.
3. strength, adequacy, effectiveness, or efficiency of any *system* or *component*.
4. causes of any condition or deficiency.
5. methods, materials, or costs of corrections.
6. future conditions including, but not limited to, failure of *systems* and *components*.
7. suitability of the property for any use.
8. compliance with regulatory requirements (codes, regulations, laws, ordinances, etc.).
9. market value of the property or its marketability.
10. advisability of the purchase of the property.
11. presence of potentially hazardous plants, animals or insects including, but not limited to wood destroying organisms, diseases or organisms harmful to humans.
12. presence of any environmental hazards including, but not limited to toxins, carcinogens, noise, and contaminants in soil, water, and air.
13. effectiveness of any *system* installed or methods utilized to control or remove suspected hazardous substances.
14. operating costs of *systems* or *components*.
15. acoustical properties of any *system* or *component*
16. design adequacy with regards to location of the home, or the elements to which it is exposed.

**C.** *Inspectors* are NOT required to offer or perform:

1. any act or service contrary to law, statute or regulation.
2. *engineering, architectural* and technical services.
3. 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 hazardous to the *inspector* or other persons or damage the property or its *systems* or *components*.

2. *confined spaces*.

3. spaces which are not readily accessible.

**F.** *Inspectors* are NOT required to *inspect*:

1. underground items including, but not limited to storage tanks or other 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 readily accessible in accordance with these National Standards of Practice.
5. detached structures.
6. common elements or common areas in multi-unit housing, such as condominium properties or cooperative housing when inspecting an individual unit(s), including the roof and building envelope.
7. test and/or operate any installed fire alarm system, burglar alarm system, automatic sprinkler system or other fire protection equipment, electronic or automated installations, telephone, intercom, cable/internet systems and any lifting equipment, elevator, freight elevator, wheelchair lift, climbing chair, escalator or others;
8. pools, spas and their associated safety devices, including fences.

**G.** *Inspectors* are NOT required to:

1. perform any procedure or operation which will, in the opinion of the *inspector*, likely be hazardous 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 National Standards of Practice.

## 4. STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS

### 4.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. *structural components* including visible foundation and framing.
2. by *probing* a sample 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. foundation(s).
2. floor structure(s).
3. wall structure(s).
4. ceiling structure(s).
5. roof structure(s).

#### C. report:

1. on conditions limiting access to structural components.
2. methods used to *inspect* the *under-floor crawl space*
3. methods used to *inspect* the attic(s).

### 4.2 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*.

## 5. EXTERIOR SYSTEMS

### 5.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. exterior wall covering(s), flashing and trim.
2. all exterior doors.
3. attached or *adjacent* decks, balconies, steps, porches, and their associated railings.
4. eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
5. vegetation, grading, and surface drainage on the property when any of these are likely to adversely affect the building.
6. walkways, patios, and driveways leading to dwelling entrances.
7. landscaping structure attached or adjacent to the building when likely to adversely affect the building.
8. attached garage or carport.
9. garage doors and garage door operators for attached garages.

#### B. describe

1. exterior wall covering(s).

#### C. report:

1. the method(s) used to inspect the exterior wall elevations.

### 5.2 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. detached garages and outbuildings.
6. seawalls, break-walls, dykes and docks.
7. erosion control and earth stabilization measures.

## 6. ROOF SYSTEMS

### 6.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. *readily accessible* roof coverings.
2. *readily accessible* roof drainage systems.
3. *readily accessible* flashings.
4. *readily accessible* skylights, chimneys, and roof penetrations.

#### B. describe

1. roof coverings.

#### C. report:

1. method(s) used to inspect the roof(s).

### 6.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. inspect:

1. antennae and satellite dishes.
2. interiors of flues or chimneys.
3. other *installed* items attached to but not related to the roof system(s).

## 7. PLUMBING SYSTEMS

### 7.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. interior water supply and distribution *systems* including all fixtures and faucets.
2. drain, waste and vent *systems* including all fixtures.
3. water heating equipment and associated venting systems.
4. water heating equipment fuel storage and fuel distribution systems.
5. fuel storage and fuel distribution *systems*.
6. drainage sumps, sump pumps, and related piping.

#### B. describe:

1. water supply, distribution, drain, waste, and vent piping materials.
2. water heating equipment including the energy source.
3. location of main water and main fuel shut-off valves.

## 7.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

### A. inspect:

1. clothes washing machine connections.
2. wells, well pumps, or water storage related equipment.
3. water conditioning *systems*.
4. solar water heating *systems*.
5. fire and lawn sprinkler *systems*.
6. 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:

1. safety valves or shut-off valves.

## 8. ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS

### 8.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. service drop.
2. service entrance conductors, cables, and raceways.
3. service equipment and main disconnects.
4. service grounding.
5. interior components of service panels and sub panels.
6. distribution conductors.
7. overcurrent protection devices.
8. a *representative number* of *installed* lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles.
9. ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) (if appropriate).
10. arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCI) (if appropriate).

#### B. describe:

1. amperage and voltage rating of the service.
2. location of main disconnect(s) and subpanel(s).
3. *wiring methods*.

#### C. report:

1. presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring.
2. absence of carbon monoxide detectors (if applicable).
3. absence of smoke detectors.
4. presence of ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI).
5. presence of arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCI).

### 8.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. inspect:

1. remote control devices unless the device is the only control device.
2. alarm *systems* and *components*.
3. low voltage wiring, *systems* and *components*.
4. ancillary wiring, *systems* and *components* not a part of the primary electrical power distribution *system*.

5. telecommunication equipment.

#### B. measure:

1. amperage, voltage, or impedance.

## 9. HEATING SYSTEMS

### 9.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. *readily accessible* components of *installed* heating equipment.
2. vent systems, flues, and chimneys.
3. fuel storage and fuel distribution *systems*.

#### B. describe:

1. energy source(s).
2. heating method(s) by distinguishing characteristics.
3. chimney(s) and/or venting material(s).
4. combustion air sources.
5. exhaust venting methods (naturally aspirating, induced draft, direct vent, direct vent sealed combustion).

### 9.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. inspect:

1. interiors of flues or chimneys.
2. heat exchangers.
3. auxiliary equipment.
4. electronic air filters.
5. solar heating *systems*.

#### B. determine:

1. system adequacy or distribution balance.

## 10. FIREPLACES AND SOLID FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES

(Unless prohibited by the authority having jurisdiction)

### 10.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. system components
2. vent systems and chimneys

#### B. describe:

1. fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances
2. chimneys

### 10.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. inspect:

1. interior of flues or chimneys
2. screens, doors and dampers
3. seals and gaskets
4. automatic fuel feed devices
5. heat distribution assists whether fan assisted or gravity

#### B. ignite or extinguish fires

#### C. determine draught characteristics

#### D. move fireplace inserts, stoves, or firebox contents

## 11. AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS

### 11.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect

1. permanently *installed* central air conditioning equipment.

#### B. describe:

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

### 11.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. inspect

1. electronic air filters.
2. portable air conditioner(s).

#### B. determine:

1. system adequacy or distribution balance.

## 12. INTERIOR SYSTEMS

### 12.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. walls, ceilings, and floors.
2. steps, stairways, and railings.
3. a *representative number* of countertops and *installed* cabinets.
4. a *representative number* of doors and windows.
5. walls, doors and ceilings separating the habitable spaces and the garage.

#### B. describe:

1. materials used for walls, ceilings and floors.
2. doors.
3. windows.

#### C. report

1. absence or ineffectiveness of guards and handrails or other potential physical injury hazards.

### 12.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. inspect:

1. *decorative* finishes.
2. window treatments.
3. central vacuum *systems*.
4. *household appliances*.
5. *recreational facilities*.

## 13. INSULATION AND VAPOUR BARRIERS

### 13.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. insulation and *vapour barriers* in unfinished spaces.

#### B. describe:

1. type of insulation material(s) and *vapour barriers* in unfinished spaces.

#### C. report

1. absence of insulation in unfinished spaces within the building envelope.
2. presence of vermiculite insulation

### 13.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

#### A. disturb

1. insulation.
2. *vapour barriers*.

#### B. obtain sample(s) for analysis

1. insulation material(s).

## 14. MECHANICAL AND NATURAL VENTILATION SYSTEMS

### 14.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

#### A. inspect:

1. ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
2. mechanical ventilation *systems*.
3. ventilation systems in areas where moisture is generated such as kitchen, bathrooms, laundry rooms.

#### B. describe:

1. ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
2. mechanical ventilation *systems*.
3. ventilation systems in areas where moisture is generated such as: kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms.

#### C. report:

1. absence of ventilation in areas where moisture is generated such as: kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms.

### 14.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

1. determine indoor air quality.
2. determine system adequacy or distribution balance.

## GLOSSARY

### **Adjacent**

Nearest in space or position; immediately adjoining without intervening space.

### **Alarm Systems**

Warning devices, installed or free-standing, including but not limited to; carbon monoxide detectors, flue gas and other spillage detectors, security equipment, ejector pumps and smoke alarms.

### **Architectural Service**

Any practice involving the art and science of building design for construction of any structure or grouping of structures and the use of space within and surrounding the structures or the design for construction, including but not specifically limited to, schematic design, design development, preparation of construction contract documents, and administration of the construction contract, adequacy of design for the location and exposure to the elements.

### **Automatic Safety Controls**

Devices designed and installed to protect *systems* and *components* from unsafe conditions.

### **Component**

A part of a *system*.

### **Confined Spaces**

An enclosed or partially enclosed area that:

1. Is occupied by people only for the purpose of completing work.
2. Has restricted entry/exit points.
3. Could be hazardous to people entering due to:
  - a. its design, construction, location or atmosphere.
  - b. the materials or substances in it, or
  - c. any other conditions which prevent normal inspection procedure.

### **Decorative**

Ornamental; not required for the operation of the essential *systems* and *components* of a building.

### **Describe**

To *report a system or component* by its type or other observed, significant characteristics to distinguish it from other *systems* or *components*.

### **Determine**

To find out, or come to a conclusion by investigation.

### **Dismantle**

To take apart or remove any component, device, or piece of equipment that would not be taken apart or removed by a homeowner in the course of normal and routine home owner maintenance.

### **Engineering Service**

Any professional service or creative work requiring engineering education, training, and experience and the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical and engineering sciences to such professional service or creative work as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design and supervision of construction for the purpose of assuring compliance with the specifications and design, in conjunction with structures, buildings, machines, equipment, works or processes.

### **Functionality**

The purpose that something is designed or expected to fulfill.

### **Further Evaluation**

Examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman or service technician beyond that provided by the *home inspection*.

### **Home Inspection**

The process by which an *inspector* visually examines the *readily accessible systems* and *components* of a building and which *describes* those *systems* and *components* in accordance with these National Standards of Practice.

### **Household Appliances**

Kitchen, laundry, and similar appliances, whether *installed* or freestanding.

### **Inspect**

To examine *readily accessible systems* and *components* of a building in accordance with these National Standards of Practice, *where applicable* 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 National Standards of Practice.

### **Installed**

Set up or fixed in position for current use or service.

### **Monitor**

Examine at regular intervals to detect evidence of change.

### **Normal Operating Controls**

Devices such as thermostats, switches or valves intended to be operated by the homeowner.

### **Operate**

To cause to function, turn on, to control the function of a machine, process, or system.

**Probing**

Examine by touch.

**Readily Accessible**

Available for visual inspection without requiring moving of personal property, *dismantling*, destructive measures, or any action which will likely involve risk to persons or property.

**Readily Openable Access Panel**

A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that is within normal reach, can be removed by one person, and is not sealed in place.

**Recreational Facilities**

Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, exercise, entertainment, athletic, playground or other similar equipment and associated accessories.

**Report**

To communicate in writing.

**Representative Number**

One *component* per room for multiple similar interior *components* such as windows and electric outlets; one *component* on each side of the building for multiple similar exterior *components*.

**Roof Drainage Systems**

Components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

**Sample**

A representative portion selected for inspection.

**Service Life/Lives**

The period during which something continues to function fully as intended.

**Significant Deficiency**

A clearly definable hazard or a clearly definable potential for failure or is unsafe or not functioning.

**Shut Down**

A state in which a *system* or *component* cannot be operated by *normal operating controls*.

**Solid Fuel Burning Appliances**

A hearth and fire chamber or similar prepared place in which a fire may be built and which is built in conjunction with a chimney; or a listed assembly of a fire chamber, its chimney and related factory-made parts designed for unit assembly without requiring field construction.

**Structural Component**

A component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

**System**

A combination of interacting or interdependent components, assembled to carry out one or more functions.

**Technically Exhaustive**

An inspection is technically exhaustive when it is done by a specialist who may make extensive use of measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, and other means to develop scientific or engineering findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

**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, missing or improper installation or a change in accepted residential construction Standards.

**Vapour Barrier**

Material used in the building envelope to retard the passage of water vapour or moisture.

**Visually Accessible**

Able to be viewed by reaching or entering.

**Wiring Methods**

Identification of electrical conductors or wires by their general type, such as "non-metallic sheathed cable" ("Romex"), "armored cable" ("bx") or "knob and tube", etc.

*Note - In these National Standards of Practice, redundancy in the description of the requirements, limitations and exclusions regarding the scope of the Home Inspection is provided for clarity not emphasis.*

*(CAHPI acknowledges The American Society of Home Inspectors®, Inc. (ASHI®) for the use of their Standards of Practice (version January 1, 2000)*

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