

Standards of Practice for Inspecting Residential Properties



INTERNACHI SOUTH AFRICA

STANDARDS of PRACTICE for the INSPECTION of RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

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I. DEFINITIONS and SCOPE

- A. 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 in home systems and their major components, and safety hazards within 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.
1. The inspection is based on observations 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.
 2. 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.
 3. A home inspection can include a survey and/or analysis of energy flows and usage in a residential property if the client requests it.
- B. 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.

II. LIMITATIONS, EXCEPTIONS & EXCLUSIONS

A. Limitations

1. An inspection is not technically exhaustive.
2. An inspection does not include the use of invasive measures.
3. An inspection will not identify concealed or latent defects.
4. An inspection will not deal with aesthetic concerns or what could be deemed matters of taste, cosmetic defects etc.
5. An inspection will not determine the suitability of the property for any use.
6. An inspection does not determine the market value of the property or its marketability.
7. An inspection does not determine the insurability of the property.
8. An inspection does not determine the advisability or inadvisability of the purchase of the inspected property.
9. An inspection does not determine the life expectancy of the property or any components or systems therein.
10. An inspection does not include items not permanently installed.
11. These Standards of Practice apply only to structures containing four or fewer physically connected dwelling units.

B. Exceptions And Exclusions

1. The inspector is not required to inspect:

- a. Electrical systems including:
 - i. service cables;
 - ii. meters;
 - iii. switchboards, distribution panels or their components;
 - iv. branch wiring;
 - v. hidden electrical components;
 - vi. low-voltage electrical systems such as, but not limited to:
 - a. phone lines;
 - b. cable lines;
 - c. antennae;
 - d. lights; or
 - e. remote controls
- b. Landscaping, including:
 - i. condition or placement of vegetation;
 - ii. any landscape irrigation systems
- c. Fire suppression systems
- d. Natural gas or Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) systems including:

- i. storage tanks and components;
 - ii. distribution or supply pipes and fittings; or
 - iii. gas-fired appliances;
2. **The inspector is 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 condition of any system or component buried underground.
 - d. The condition of any system or component that is not readily visible.
 - e. Soil composition or its adequacy for any purpose including building.
 - f. The service life expectancy of any component or system.
 - g. The size, capacity, BTU, performance or efficiency of any component or system.
 - h. The cause of, or reason for, any condition.
 - i. The cause for the need of repair or replacement of any system or component.
 - j. Future conditions.
 - k. Compliance with any codes or regulations.
 - l. The presence of evidence of infestations by rodents, animals, or wood-destroying insects.
 - m. The presence, levels or species of mould fungi.
 - n. The presence of airborne environmental hazards.
 - o. The presence of toxic materials or materials that may emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
 - p. The presence of unwanted birds, insects, reptiles or mammals.
 - q. The presence of pathogenic microbes.
 - r. The presence of other plants or animals.
 - s. The outdoor or indoor air quality.
 - t. The presence of asbestos.
 - u. The presence of environmental hazards such as, but not limited to, asbestos, mould, or lead in paint.
 - v. The presence of electromagnetic fields.
 - w. The presence of hazardous materials including, but not limited to, the presence of lead in paint.
 - x. Any hazardous waste conditions.
 - y. Any manufacturers' recalls or conformance with manufacturer installation, or any information included for consumer protection purposes.
 - z. The acoustical properties of any systems.
3. **The inspector is not required to provide estimates for:**
- a. The cost to operate or maintain any given system.

b. The cost to correct or repair any defective condition.

4. **The inspector is not required to operate:**

- a. Any system that is shut down.
- b. Any system that does not function properly.
- c. Any system that does not respond to the normal operating controls.
- d. Any shut-off valves or manual stop valves.
- e. Any electrical disconnect or over-current protection devices.
- f. Any alarm systems.
- g. Moisture meters, gas detectors or similar equipment.

5. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. move any personal items or other obstructions, such as, but not limited to:
 - i. floor or wall coverings;
 - ii. throw rugs;
 - iii. ceiling tiles;
 - iv. window coverings;
 - v. equipment;
 - vi. plants;
 - vii. ice;
 - viii. debris;
 - ix. snow;
 - x. water;
 - xi. dirt;
 - xii. foliage; or
 - xiii. pets.
- b. Dismantle, open or uncover any system or components.
- c. Enter or access any area that may, in the opinion of the inspector, be unsafe or not readily accessible.
- d. Inspect underground items such as, but not limited to, underground storage tanks or indications of their presence, whether abandoned or actively used.
- e. Inspect decorative items.
- f. Inspect common elements or areas in multi-unit housing.
- g. Inspect intercoms, speaker systems, security devices, or landscape irrigation systems.
- h. Inspect on any system or component which is not included in these Standards.
- i. Offer guarantees or warranties.
- j. Offer or perform any engineering services.

- k. Offer to the client to perform any trade or professional service other than home inspection.
- l. Research the history of the property; report on its potential for alteration, modification, extendibility or suitability for a specific or proposed use for occupancy.
- m. Determine the age of construction or installation of any system structure or component of a building, or differentiate between original construction and subsequent additions, improvements, renovations or replacements.
- n. Determine the insurability of a property.
- o. 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 pets.

III. STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

A. Roof

1. The inspector shall inspect from ground level, windows, or eaves, and report on the condition of:

- a. the primary roof-covering material;
- b. the gutters;
- c. the downpipes;
- d. the vents, flashing, skylights, chimney and other roof penetrations; and
- e. The general structure of the roof from the readily accessible panels, doors or stairs.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Walk on any sloped roof surface.
- b. Walk on any roof areas that appear, in the opinion of the inspector, to be unsafe.
- c. Walk on any roof areas if it might, in the opinion of the inspector, cause damage.
- d. Inspect underground roof drainage pipes. Identify the composition of the roof covering material
- e. Inspect antennae, lightning arresters, de-icing equipment, or similar attachments. Predict the service life expectancy.
- f. Remove snow, ice, debris or other conditions that prohibit the observation of the roof surfaces.
- g. Move insulation.
- h. Perform a water test.
- i. Warrant or certify the roof as leakproof.
- j. Confirm proper fastening.

B. Exterior

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. describe, and report on the condition of the exterior wall covering;
- b. and report on the condition of the siding, flashing and trim;
- c. and report on the condition of all door and window exteriors, decks, stoops, steps, stairs, porches, handrail assemblies and guardrails, eaves, soffits and fascias;
- d. and report on the condition of the vegetation, surface drainage, and retaining walls when these are likely to adversely affect the structure;
- e. and report as a potential safety hazard any spacing between intermediate balusters, spindles and rails for steps, stairways, balustrades, balconies or railings that exceeds modern safety standards.; and

f. and report on the presence of a visible damp course.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

a. Evaluate trees or landscaping

b. Inspect or operate screens, storm windows, shutters, awnings, or exterior accent lighting.

c. Inspect fences or outbuildings,

d. Inspect items, including window and door flashing that are not visible or readily accessible from the ground.

e. Identify geological, geotechnical, hydrological or soil conditions.

f. Inspect recreational facilities or playground equipment.

g. Inspect seawalls, break walls or docks.

h. Inspect erosion-control or earth-stabilization measures.

i. Inspect for safety-type glass.

j. Inspect underground utilities.

k. Inspect underground items.

l. Inspect components of private water supply (bore) or springs.

m. Inspect solar, wind or geothermal systems.

n. Inspect swimming pools or spas.

o. Inspect components of private onsite wastewater (septic) systems

p. Inspect landscape irrigation systems.

q. Inspect drain fields or dry wells.

r. Determine the integrity of multiple-pane window glazing

C. **Cellar, Under-floor Spaces & Structure**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

a. the cellar;

b. The foundation;

c. and report on the condition of under-floor spaces, where accessible;

d. and report on the condition of the visible structural components;

e. and report on the location of cellar or under-floor space access openings;

f. and report any present conditions or clear indications of active water seepage or penetration;

g. and report any general indications of foundation movement, such as, but not limited to: cracks in interior and exterior wall coverings, out-of-square door frames, and sloped floors;

h. and report on any cutting, notching and boring of framing members that may present a structural or safety concern;

i. and report on wood in contact with soil;

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Enter any under-floor 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.

D. **Heating**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. and operate 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 that do not operate;
- c. and report if the heating systems are deemed inaccessible.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Inspect or evaluate the interior of flues or chimneys, fire chambers, heat exchangers, combustion air systems, fresh air intakes, humidifiers, dehumidifiers, electronic air filters, geothermal systems, or solar heating systems.
- b. Inspect fuel tanks or underground or concealed fuel supply systems.
- 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 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.

E. **Fireplace**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. and report on the condition of the fireplace, including the:
 - i. firebox
 - ii. proper operation of the damper, if readily accessible;

- iii. the condition of the hearth; and
- iv. for adequate clearance from the firebox to combustibles.

2. **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 any installation.
- g. Inspect automatic fuel-feed devices.
- h. Inspect combustion and/or make-up air devices.
- i. Inspect heat-distribution devices, whether gravity-controlled or fan-assisted.
- j. Ignite or extinguish fires.
- k. Determine the adequacy of drafts or draft characteristics.
- l. Move fireplace inserts or firebox contents.
- m. Perform a smoke test.
- n. Dismantle or remove any component.

F. **Cooling**

1. **The inspector shall:**

- a. Identify the type of cooling system installed;
- b. Inspect the cooling equipment using normal operating controls.

2. **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. Determine proper condition of electrical current, coolant fluids or gases, or presence of coolant leakage.
- c. Inspect window-mounted air conditioning units.
- d. Operate equipment or systems if the exterior temperature is below 18 degrees Celsius, or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.
- e. Inspect or determine thermostat calibration, cooling anticipation, or automatic setbacks or clocks.

G. **Plumbing**

1. **The inspector shall:**

- a. identify the water supply as public or private;
- b. inspect and describe the visual condition of the primary water supply shut-off valves, as well as describe its location;
- c. inspect the home water distribution system, including:
 - i. identifying the location of the main water shut-off valve and it's visible condition;
 - ii. visible distribution pipes, and identify as a potential health hazard any lead water supply pipes;
 - iii. all taps, fixtures and faucets;
- d. inspect the accessible, visible drain, waste and vent systems for functional flow, functional drainage, proper operation and configuration;
- e. inspect the home water heating equipment, including:
 - i. geyser
 - ii. combustion exhaust gas venting;
 - iii. identification of the fuel type used for heating water; and
 - iv. verification of the presence or absence of temperature-pressure relief valves and properly terminated discharge pipe;
- f. inspect and test accessible sump pumps;
- g. inspect and report as in need correction deficiencies in the installation of hot and cold water faucets;
- h. inspect and report as in need of repair any mechanical drain stops that are missing or do not operate if installed in sinks, lavatories and tubs;
 - i. Inspect and report as in need of repair toilets that:
 - i. have loose tanks, or are loose at the floor;
 - ii. have cracks in the ceramic material;
 - iii. leak; or
 - iv. have tank components that do not operate as designed;
 - j. flush toilets;
 - k. water-test sinks, tubs and showers for functional drainage; and
 - l. describe any visible fuel-storage systems.

2. **The inspector is not required to :**

- a. Inspect the interior of:
 - i. flues or chimneys;
 - ii. combustion air systems;

- iii. water softener or filtering systems;
- iv. bore pumps or tanks;
- b. test or operate safety or shut-off valves;
- c. test floor drains; or
- d. inspect fire suppression systems.
- e. inspect landscape irrigation systems;
- f. inspect, test or evaluate private onsite wastewater and sewage treatment (septic) systems or their components.
- g. Inspect any equipment related to private water supply (bore)
- h. Inspect any underground or concealed fuel supply systems.
- i. Inspect or evaluate any water treatment, filtration or conditioning systems.
- j. Inspect water storage tanks, pressure pumps or bladder tanks.
- k. Inspect, test or evaluate ancillary systems or components, such as, but not limited to, those related to:
 - i. solar water heating; or
 - ii. hot water re-circulation.
 - l. Inspect clothes washing machines or their connections.
- m. inspect components of any fuel gas systems such as natural gas or liquid petroleum gas.
- n. Determine the age, life expectancy, temperature or size adequacy of the geyser.
- o. Determine with accuracy the flow rate, volume, pressure, temperature or adequacy of the water supply.
- p. Determine the water quality, portability or reliability of the water supply or source.
- q. Determine the presence or effectiveness of anti-siphon, back-flow prevention or drain-stop devices.
- r. Determine whether there are sufficient cleanouts for effective cleaning of drain pipes.
- s. Evaluate for any compliance with local, territorial, or state conservation or energy standards, or the proper design or sizing of any water supply, waste or venting components, fixtures or piping.
- t. Evaluate wait-time to obtain hot water at fixtures, or perform testing of any kind to water heater elements.
- u. Evaluate or determine the adequacy of combustion air.
- v. Test, operate, open or close safety controls, manual stop valves and/or temperature or pressure-relief valves.
- w. Test shower pans, tub and shower surrounds or enclosures for leakage.
- x. Open sealed plumbing access panels.
- y. Operate any primary or under-counter water or gas valve.

z. Light or ignite pilot flames.

I. **H. Roofspace & Insulation**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. and report on the general absence or lack of insulation in unfinished spaces;
- b. The visible home structure;

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Enter the roofspace or any 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. Move, touch or disturb insulation.
- c. Move, touch or disturb vapour retarders.
- d. Break or otherwise damage the surface finish or weather seal on or around access panels or covers.
- e. Identify the composition or exact R-value of insulation material.
- f. Determine the types of materials used in insulation or wrapping of pipes, ducts, jackets, boilers or wiring.

I. **Doors, Windows & Interior**

1. **The inspector shall:**

- a. open and close a representative number of doors and windows;
- b. inspect the walls, ceilings, steps, stairways, handrails and guardrails;
- c. and report as being in a state of non-compliance with modern safety standards any spacing between balusters, spindles and treads that permit the passage of a sphere greater than 125 mm in diameter;
- d. and report as in need of repair or replacement any double-pane windows that display obvious visible evidence of seal failure.
- e. inspect the following garage door components:
 - i. garage door openers by operating the installed automatic overhead door control;
 - ii. the automatic overhead door opener manual disconnect;
 - iii. Overhead door support structure; and
 - iv. any installed safety photo-electric sensors controlling automatic stop or reverse.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Inspect paint, wallpaper, and 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 or fixtures.
- f. Move furniture, stored items, or any coverings, such as carpets or rugs, in order to inspect the concealed floor structure.
- g. Move suspended-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 pressure-activated auto-reverse or related safety function of a garage door.
- k. Operate or evaluate any security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including their 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. Discover firewall compromises.
- u. Examine or operate any above-ground, movable, freestanding, or otherwise non-permanently installed pool, spa, recreational equipment or self-contained equipment.
- v. Come into contact with any pool or spa water in order to determine the system's structure or components.
- w. Determine the adequacy of spa jet water's force or bubble effect.
- x. Determine the structural integrity or leakage of a pool or spa.

4.0 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:** to constitute, or potentially constitute, a negative or destructive impact.
- 4.4. **alarm system:** warning devices, installed or freestanding, 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 the 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's structural component.
- 4.10. **decorative:** ornamental; not required for the operation of essential systems or components of a home.
- 4.11. **describe:** to report in writing a system or component by its type or other observed characteristics in order 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 and/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 a tool for removal.
- 4.27 Invasive **measures** are intentional actions that result in damage to systems, components or materials.
- 4.28 A **latent defect** is a fault in the property that could not have been discovered by a reasonably thorough inspection before the sale.
- 4.29. **material defect:** a condition of 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 its normal useful life is not, by itself, a material defect.
- 4.30. **normal operating controls:** devices, such as thermostats, that would be operated by ordinary occupants which require no specialized skill or knowledge.
- 4.31. **observe:** to see through visually directed attention.
- 4.32. **operate:** to cause systems to function or turn on with normal operating controls.
- 4.33. **readily accessible:** an item or component that is, in the judgment of the inspector, capable of being safely observed without the removal of obstacles, detachment or disengagement of connecting or securing devices, or other unsafe or difficult procedures to gain access.
- 4.34. **recreational facilities:** spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment and athletic facilities.
- 4.35. **report:** a written communication (possibly including images) of any material defects observed during the inspection.
- 4.36. **representative number:** a sufficient number to serve as a typical or characteristic example of the item(s) inspected.
- 4.37. **safety glazing:** tempered glass, laminated glass, or rigid plastic.
- 4.38. **shut down:** turned off, unplugged, inactive, not in service, not operational, etc.

- 4.39. **structural component:** a component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).
- 4.40. **system:** an assembly of various components which function as a whole.
- 4.41. **technically exhaustive:** a comprehensive and detailed examination beyond the scope of a real estate home inspection that 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.
- 4.42. **unsafe:** a condition in a system or component that 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.
- 4.43. **verify:** to confirm or substantiate.

The aforementioned terms are found within the Standards of Practice.

I. DEFINITIONS and SCOPE

- A. 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 in home systems and their major components, and safety hazards within 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.
1. The inspection is based on observations 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.
 2. 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.
 3. A home inspection can include a survey and/or analysis of energy flows and usage in a residential property if the client requests it.
- B. A material defect is a condition of 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 its normal useful life is not, by itself, a material defect.
- C. 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.

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A. Limitations

1. An inspection is not technically exhaustive.
2. An inspection does not include the use of invasive measures
3. An inspection will not identify concealed or latent defects
4. An inspection will not deal with aesthetic concerns or what could be deemed matters of taste, cosmetic defects etc.
5. An inspection will not determine the suitability of the property for any use.
6. An inspection does not determine the market value of the property or its marketability
7. An inspection does not determine the insurability of the property
8. An inspection does not determine the advisability or inadvisability of the purchase of the inspected property
9. An inspection does not determine the life expectancy of the property or any components or systems therein.
10. An inspection does not include items not permanently installed.
11. These Standards of Practice apply only to structures containing four or fewer physically connected dwelling units.

B. Exceptions And Exclusions

1. The inspector is not required to inspect:

- a. Electrical systems including:
 - i. service cables;
 - ii. meters;
 - iii. switchboards or their components;
 - iv. branch wiring;
 - v. hidden electrical components;
 - vi. low-voltage electrical systems such as, but not limited to:
 - a. phone lines;
 - b. cable lines;
 - c. antennae;
 - d. lights; or
 - e. remote controls
- b. Landscaping, including:
 - i. condition or placement of flora;
 - ii. any landscape irrigation systems
- c. Fire suppression systems
- d. Natural gas or Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) systems including:

- i. storage tanks and components;
- ii. distribution or supply pipes and fittings; or
- iii. gas-fired appliances;

2. **The inspector is not required to determine:**

- i. Property boundary lines or encroachments.
- ii. The condition of any component or system that is not readily accessible.
- iii. The condition of any system or component buried underground
- iv. The condition of any system or component that is not readily visible
- v. Soil composition or its adequacy for any purpose including building
- vi. The service life expectancy of any component or system.
- vii. The size, capacity, BTU, performance or efficiency of any component or system.
- viii. The cause of, or reason for, any condition.
- ix. The cause for the need of repair or replacement of any system or component.
- x. Future conditions.
- xi. Compliance with any codes or regulations.
- xii. The presence of evidence of infestations by rodents, animals, or wood-destroying insects.
- xiii. The presence, levels or species of mould fungi
- xiv. The presence of airborne hazards.
- xv. The presence of toxic materials or materials that may emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
- xvi. The presence of unwanted birds, insects, reptiles or mammals.
- xvii. The presence of pathogenic microbes
- xviii. The presence of other flora or fauna.
- xix. The outdoor or indoor air quality.
- xx. The presence of asbestos.
- xxi. The presence of environmental hazards.
- xxii. The presence of electromagnetic fields.
- xxiii. The presence of hazardous materials including, but not limited to, the presence of lead in paint.
- xxiv. Any hazardous waste conditions.
- xxv. Any manufacturers' recalls or conformance with manufacturer installation, or any information included for consumer protection purposes.
- xxvi. The acoustical properties of any systems.

3. **The inspector is not required to provide estimates for:**

- i. The cost to operate or maintain any given system.
- ii. The cost to correct or repair any defective condition.

4. **The inspector is not required to operate:**

- i. Any system that is shut down.
- ii. Any system that does not function properly
- iii. Any system that does not respond to the normal operating controls.
- iv. Any shut-off valves or manual stop valves.
- v. Any electrical disconnect or over-current protection devices.
- vi. Any alarm systems.
- vii. Moisture meters, gas detectors or similar equipment.

5. **The inspector is not required to:**

- i. move any personal items or other obstructions, such as, but not limited to:
 - a. floor or wall coverings;
 - b. throw rugs;
 - c. ceiling tiles;
 - d. window coverings;
 - e. equipment;
 - f. plants;
 - g. ice;
 - h. debris;
 - i. snow;
 - j. water;
 - k. dirt;
 - l. foliage; or
 - m. pets.
- ii. Dismantle, open or uncover any system or components
- iii. Enter or access any area that may, in the opinion of the inspector, be unsafe or not readily accessible.
- iv. Inspect underground items such as, but not limited to, underground storage tanks or indications of their presence, whether abandoned or actively used.
- v. Inspect decorative items
- vi. Inspect common elements or areas in multi-unit housing.
- vii. Inspect intercoms, speaker systems, security devices, or landscape irrigation systems.

- viii. Inspect on any system or component which is not included in these Standards.
- ix. Offer guarantees or warranties.
- x. Offer or perform any engineering services.
- xi. Offer or perform any trade or professional service other than home inspection.
- xii. Research the history of the property; report on its potential for alteration, modification, extendibility or suitability for a specific or proposed use for occupancy.
- xiii. Determine the age of construction or installation of any system structure or component of a building, or differentiate between original construction and subsequent additions, improvements, renovations or replacements.
- xiv. Determine the insurability of a property.
- xv. 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 pets.

III. STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

A. **Roof**

1. The inspector shall inspect from ground level or eaves, and report on the condition of:
 - a. the primary roof-covering material;
 - b. the gutters;
 - c. the downspouts;
 - d. the vents, flashing, skylights, chimney and other roof penetrations; and
 - e. The general structure of the roof from the readily accessible panels, doors or stairs.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Walk on any pitched roof surface.
- b. Walk on any roof areas that appear, in the opinion of the inspector, to be unsafe.
- c. Walk on any roof areas if it might, in the opinion of the inspector, cause damage.
- d. Inspect underground roof drainage pipes. Identify the composition of the roof covering material
- e. Inspect antennae, lightning arresters, de-icing equipment, or similar attachments. Predict the service life expectancy.
- f. Remove snow, ice, debris or other conditions that prohibit the observation of the roof surfaces.
- g. Move insulation.
- h. Perform a water test.
- i. Warrant or certify the roof.
- j. Confirm proper fastening.

B. **Exterior**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. describe, and report on the condition of the exterior wall covering.
- b. and report on the condition of the siding, flashing and trim;
- c. and report on the condition of all door and window exteriors, decks, stoops, steps, stairs, porches, handrail assemblies and guardrails, eaves, soffits and fascias;
- d. and report on the condition of the vegetation, surface drainage, and retaining walls when these are likely to adversely affect the structure;
- e. and report as non-compliant with modern safety standards any spacing between intermediate balusters, spindles and rails for steps, stairways, balconies and railings that permit the passage of an object greater than 125 mm in diameter; and
- f. and report on the presence of a visible damp course.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Evaluate trees or landscaping
- b. Inspect or operate screens, storm windows, shutters, awnings, or exterior accent lighting.
- c. Inspect fences or outbuildings,
- d. Inspect items, including window and door flashing that are not visible or readily accessible from the ground.
- e. Inspect geological, geotechnical, hydrological or soil conditions.
- f. Inspect recreational facilities or playground equipment.
- g. Inspect seawalls, break walls or docks.
- h. Inspect erosion-control or earth-stabilization measures.
- i. Inspect for safety-type glass.
- j. Inspect underground utilities.
- k. Inspect underground items.
- l. Inspect components of private water supply (bore) or springs.
- m. Inspect solar, wind or geothermal systems.
- n. Inspect swimming pools or spas.
- o. Inspect components of private onsite wastewater (septic) systems
- p. Inspect landscape irrigation systems.
- q. Inspect drain fields or dry wells.
- r. Determine the integrity of the thermal window seals or damaged glass.

C. **Cellar and Under-floor spaces**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. the cellar
- b. and report on the condition of under-floor spaces, where accessible;
- c. and report on the condition of the visible structural components;
- d. and report on the location of under-floor access openings;
- e. and report any present conditions or clear indications of active water penetration;
- f. and report any general indications of foundation movement, such as, but not limited to: cracks in interior and exterior wall coverings, out-of-square door frames, and sloped floors;
- g. and report on any cutting, notching and boring of framing members that may present a structural or safety concern;
- h. for wood in contact with soil;

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Enter any under-floor 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.

D. **Heating**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. and operate 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 that do not operate;
- c. and report if the heating systems are deemed inaccessible.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Inspect or evaluate the interior of flues or chimneys, fire chambers, heat exchangers, combustion air systems, fresh air intakes, humidifiers, dehumidifiers, electronic air filters, geothermal systems, or solar heating systems.
- b. Inspect fuel tanks or underground or concealed fuel supply systems.
- 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 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.

E. **Fireplace**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. and report on the condition of the fireplace, including the:
 - i. firebox
 - ii. proper operation of the damper, if readily accessible;
 - iii. the condition of the hearth; and
 - iv. for adequate clearance from the firebox to combustibles.

2. **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 any installation.
- g. Inspect automatic fuel-feed devices.
- h. Inspect combustion and/or make-up air devices.
- i. Inspect heat-distribution devices, whether gravity-controlled or fan-assisted.
- j. Ignite or extinguish fires.
- k. Determine the adequacy of drafts or draft characteristics.
- l. Move fireplace inserts or firebox contents.
- m. Perform a smoke test.
- n. Dismantle or remove any component.

F. **Cooling**

1. **The inspector shall:**

- a. Identify the type of cooling system installed;
- b. Inspect the cooling equipment using normal operating controls.

2. **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. Determine proper condition of electrical current, coolant fluids or gases, or presence of coolant leakage.
- c. Inspect window-mounted air conditioning units.
- d. Operate equipment or systems if the exterior temperature is below 18 degrees Celsius, or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.
- e. Inspect or determine thermostat calibration, cooling anticipation, or automatic setbacks or clocks.

G. **Plumbing**

1. **The inspector shall:**

- a. identify the water supply as public or private;
- b. inspect and describe the visual condition of the primary water supply and fuel shut-off valves, as well as describe their location;

- c. inspect the water distribution system, including:
 - i. identifying the location of the main water shut-off valve and it's visible condition;
 - ii. visible distribution pipes, and identify as a potential health hazard any lead water supply pipes;
 - iii. all taps, fixtures and faucets;
- d. inspect the accessible, visible drain, waste and vent systems for proper drainage, operation and configuration;
- e. inspect the water heating equipment, including:
 - i. venting;
 - ii. distribution pipe connections;
 - iii. identification of the energy source; and
 - iv. verification of the presence or absence of temperature-pressure relief valves and properly terminated discharge pipe;
- f. inspect and test accessible sump pumps;
- g. inspect and report as in need of repair deficiencies in the water supply functional flow;
- h. inspect and report as in need correction deficiencies in the installation of hot and cold water faucets;
 - i. inspect and report as in need of repair any mechanical drain stops that are missing or do not operate if installed in sinks, lavatories and tubs;
 - j. Inspect and report as in need of repair toilets that:
 - i. have loose tanks, or are loose at the floor;
 - ii. have cracks in the ceramic material;
 - iii. leak; or
 - iv. have tank components that do not operate as designed;
 - k. flush toilets;
 - l. water-test sinks, tubs and showers for functional drainage; and
- m. describe any visible fuel-storage systems.

2. **The inspector is not required to :**

- a. Inspect the interior of:
 - i. flues or chimneys;
 - ii. combustion air systems;
 - iii. water softener or filtering systems;
 - iv. bore pumps or tanks;
 - v. safety or shut-off valves;
 - vi. floor drains;
 - vii. landscape irrigation systems; or

- viii. fire suppression systems.
- b. inspect, test or evaluate private onsite wastewater and sewage treatment (septic) systems or their components.
- c. Inspect, test or evaluate the condition performance of any private water supply (bore) or springs or related equipment
- d. Inspect any underground or concealed fuel supply systems.
- e. Inspect or evaluate water treatment systems or water filters.
- f. Inspect water storage tanks, pressure pumps or bladder tanks.
- g. Inspect, test or evaluate ancillary systems or components, such as, but not limited to, those related to:
 - i. solar water heating; or
 - ii. hot water re-circulation.
- h. Inspect clothes washing machines or their connections.
 - i. inspect components of any fuel gas systems such as natural gas or liquid petroleum gas.
 - j. Determine the age, life expectancy, temperature or size adequacy of the water heater.
 - k. Determine with accuracy the flow rate, volume, pressure, temperature or adequacy of the water supply.
 - l. Determine the water quality, portability or reliability of the water supply or source.
- m. Determine the presence or effectiveness of anti-siphon, back-flow prevention or drain-stop devices.
- n. Determine whether there are sufficient cleanouts for effective cleaning of drain pipes.
- o. Evaluate for any compliance with local, territorial, or state conservation or energy standards, or the proper design or sizing of any water supply, waste or venting components, fixtures or piping.
- p. Evaluate wait-time to obtain hot water at fixtures, or perform testing of any kind to water heater elements.
- q. Evaluate or determine the adequacy of combustion air.
- r. Test, operate, open or close safety controls, manual stop valves and/or temperature or pressure-relief valves.
- s. Test shower pans, tub and shower surrounds or enclosures for leakage.
- t. Open sealed plumbing access panels.
- u. Operate any primary or under-counter water or gas valve.
- v. Light or ignite pilot flames.

I. **H. Roofspace & Insulation**

1. **The inspector shall inspect:**

- a. and report on the general absence or lack of insulation in unfinished spaces;
- b. The visible home structure;

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Enter the roofspace or any 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. Move, touch or disturb insulation.
- c. Move, touch or disturb vapour retarders.
- d. Break or otherwise damage the surface finish or weather seal on or around access panels or covers.
- e. Identify the composition or exact R-value of insulation material.
- f. Determine the types of materials used in insulation or wrapping of pipes, ducts, jackets, boilers or wiring.

I. **Doors, Windows & Interior**

1. **The inspector shall:**

- a. open and close a representative number of doors and windows;
- b. inspect the walls, ceilings, steps, stairways, handrails and guardrails;
- c. and report as being in a state of non-compliance with modern safety standards any spacing between balusters, spindles and treads that permit the passage of a sphere greater than 125 mm in diameter;
- d. and report as in need of repair or replacement any double-pane windows that display obvious visible evidence of seal failure.
- e. inspect the following garage door components:
 - i. garage door openers by operating the installed automatic overhead door control;
 - ii. the automatic overhead door opener manual disconnect;
 - iii. Overhead door support structure; and
 - iv. any installed safety photo-electric sensors controlling automatic stop or reverse.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

- a. Inspect paint, wallpaper, and 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 or fixtures.

- f. Move furniture, stored items, or any coverings, such as carpets or rugs, in order to inspect the concealed floor structure.
- g. Move suspended-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 pressure-activated auto-reverse or related safety function of a garage door.
- k. Operate or evaluate any security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including their 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. Discover firewall compromises.
- u. Examine or operate any above-ground, movable, freestanding, or otherwise non-permanently installed pool, spa, recreational equipment or self-contained equipment.
- v. Come into contact with any pool or spa water in order to determine the system's structure or components.
- w. Determine the adequacy of spa jet water's force or bubble effect.
- x. Determine the structural integrity or leakage of a pool or spa.

4.0 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:** to constitute, or potentially constitute, a negative or destructive impact.
- 4.4. **alarm system:** warning devices, installed or freestanding, 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 the 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's structural component.
- 4.10. **decorative:** ornamental; not required for the operation of essential systems or components of a home.
- 4.11. **describe:** to report in writing a system or component by its type or other observed characteristics in order 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 and/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 a tool for removal.
- 4.27 Invasive **measures** are intentional actions that result in damage to systems, components or materials.
- 4.28 A **latent defect** is a fault in the property that could not have been discovered by a reasonably thorough inspection before the sale.
- 4.29. **material defect:** a condition of 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 its normal useful life is not, by itself, a material defect.
- 4.30. **normal operating controls:** devices, such as thermostats, that would be operated by ordinary occupants which require no specialized skill or knowledge.
- 4.31. **observe:** to see through visually directed attention.
- 4.32. **operate:** to cause systems to function or turn on with normal operating controls.
- 4.33. **readily accessible:** an item or component that is, in the judgment of the inspector, capable of being safely observed without the removal of obstacles, detachment or disengagement of connecting or securing devices, or other unsafe or difficult procedures to gain access.
- 4.34. **recreational facilities:** spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment and athletic facilities.
- 4.35. **report:** a written communication (possibly including images) of any material defects observed during the inspection.
- 4.36. **representative number:** a sufficient number to serve as a typical or characteristic example of the item(s) inspected.
- 4.37. **safety glazing:** tempered glass, laminated glass, or rigid plastic.
- 4.38. **shut down:** turned off, unplugged, inactive, not in service, not operational, etc.

- 4.39. **structural component:** a component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).
- 4.40. **system:** an assembly of various components which function as a whole.
- 4.41. **technically exhaustive:** a comprehensive and detailed examination beyond the scope of a real estate home inspection that 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.
- 4.42. **unsafe:** a condition in a system or component that 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.
- 4.43. **verify:** to confirm or substantiate.

The aforementioned terms are found within the Standards of Practice.