



Canadian Association Of Home & Property Inspectors

NATIONAL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

SEPTEMBER 2010

(VER D SEPT 15/10)

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 include 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 the following is a visual inspection of a building does not constitute an evaluation or a verification of compliance with building codes and Standards or regulations governing the construction industry or the health and safety industry, neither or with Standards and regulations governing insurability for the purpose of insuring risk.

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-B.C., CAHPI-Alberta, CAHPI-Sask., CAHPI-Manitoba, OAHPI (Ontario), AIBQ (Quebec), and CAHPI-Atlantic. CAHPI's objectives include promotion of 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 a 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.

The building shall 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 has been no significant loss of *functionality*.

In these Standards, the basis for comparison is a building of similar age and similar type to the subject building, and which is in reasonable condition – having been adequately maintained over the life of the building. It follows that the building may not be in compliance with current building Standards, building regulations and the like that are applicable at the time of inspection.

These National Standards of Practice apply to inspections of part or all of a building of a maximum of (3) stories and a building area of a maximum of 600 square meters (excluding the basement), and 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.

2. *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*, are *significantly deficient* or are near the end of their service lives.

2. a reason why, if not self-evident, 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 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 or animals including, but not limited to wood destroying organisms or diseases 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:

1. or perform any act or service contrary to law, statute or regulation.
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 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 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 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) this includes the roof and building envelope.
7. and/or test and/or operate any installed fire alarm system, burglar alarm system, automatic sprinkler system or other fire protection equipment, electronic or automated installations 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 SYSTEM

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

C. report:

1. on limitation of structural components not visible or accessible.

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

5.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect:

1. exterior wall covering, 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 the 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 SYSTEM

6.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect:

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

B. describe the roof coverings.

C. report:

1. on the 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* accessories and items.

7. PLUMBING SYSTEM

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.
4. vent systems, flues, and chimneys.
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 SYSTEM

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. conductors.
7. over current protection devices.
8. a *representative number* of *installed* lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles.
9. ground fault circuit interrupters (if appropriate).

B. describe:

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

C. report:

1. on the absence of smoke detectors.

2. on the absence of carbon monoxide detectors (if applicable).
3. on the presence of arc fault circuit interrupters

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. to test arc fault circuit interrupters.
6. telecommunication equipment.

B. measure:

1. amperage, voltage, or impedance.

9. HEATING SYSTEMS

9.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect:

1. *visually 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).

C. report

1. combustion air sources/make up air and exhaust venting methods.

9.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

A. inspect:

1. interiors of flues or chimneys.
2. heat exchangers.
3. auxiliary equipment.
4. solar heating *systems*.
5. fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances.
6. electronic air filters.

B. determine:

1. system adequacy or distribution balance.

10. AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS

10.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect the permanently *installed* central air conditioning equipment.

B. describe:

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

10.2 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.

11. INTERIOR

11.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect:

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

11.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

A. inspect:

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

12. INSULATION

12.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect:

1. insulation and vapour barriers in unfinished spaces.

B. describe:

1. insulation and vapour barriers in unfinished spaces.

C. report

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

12.2 THE INSPECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

- A. disturb insulation or vapour barriers.

13. MECHANICAL AND NATURAL VENTILATION

13.1 THE INSPECTOR SHALL:

A. inspect:

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

13.2 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

Is 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

Decorative

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

Determine

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

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 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.

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

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

Significantly Deficient

Sufficiently lacking a specified quality to be worthy of attention by the inspector and/or the client.

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

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.