

CHAPTER TWO
STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

.2001 MINIMUM STANDARDS

This Chapter sets for the minimum Standards of Practice required of licensed home inspectors.

.2002 DEFINITIONS

The definitions in Section .1005 are incorporated into this Chapter by reference. The following definitions apply to this Chapter.

- A. Automatic Safety Controls: Devices designed and installed to protect systems and components from excessively high or low pressures and temperatures, excessive electrical current, loss of water, loss of ignition, fuel leaks, fire, freezing, or other unsafe conditions.
- B. Central Air Conditioning: A system that uses ducts to distribute cooled or dehumidified air to more than one room or uses pipes to distribute chilled water to heat exchangers in more than one room, and that is not plugged into an electrical convenience outlet.
- C. Cross Connection: Any physical connection or arrangement between potable water and any source of contamination.
- D. Dangerous or Adverse Situations: Situations that pose a threat of injury to the inspector, or those situations that require the use of special protective clothing or safety equipment.
- E. Describe: Report in writing a system or component by its type, or other observed characteristics, to distinguish it from other components used for the same project.
- F. Dismantle: To take apart or remove any component by its type, or other observed characteristics, to distinguish it from other components used for the same project.
- G. Enter: To go into an area to observe all visible components.
- H. Functional Drainage: A drain is functional when it empties in a reasonable amount of time and does not overflow when another fixture is drained simultaneously.
- I. Functional Flow: A reasonable flow at the highest fixture in a dwelling when another fixture is operated simultaneously.
- J. Inspect: To examine readily accessible systems and components of a building in accordance with the Standards or Practice, using normal operating controls and opening readily open able access panels.
- K. Installed: Attached or connected such that the installed item requires tools for removal.
- L. Normal Operating Controls: Homeowner operated devices such as a thermostat, wall switch, or safety switch.
- M. Observe: The act of making a visual examination.
- N. On-Site Water Supply Quality: Water quality based on the bacterial, chemical, mineral and solids contents of the water
- O. On-Site Water Supply Quantity: Water quantity based on the rate of flow of water.
- P. Operate: To cause systems or equipment to function.
- Q. Readily open able access panel: A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that has removable or operable fasteners or latch devices in order to be lifted off, swung open, or otherwise removed by one person; and its edges and fasteners are not painted in place. This definition is limited to those panels within normal reach or from four-foot (4') stepladder, and that are not blocked by stored items, furniture, or building components.

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.2002 DEFINITIONS (Continued)

- R. Representative Number: For multiple identical components such as windows and electrical outlets – one (1) such component per room. For multiple identical exterior components – one (1) such component on each side of the building.
- S. Roof Drainage System: Gutters, downspouts, leaders, splash blocks, scuppers, and similar components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.
- T. Shut Down: A piece of equipment or a system is shut down when it cannot be operated by the device or control that a homeowner should normally use to operate it. If its safety switch or circuit breaker is in the “off” position, or its fuse is missing or blown, the inspector is not required to re-establish the circuit for the purpose of operating the equipment or system.
- U. Solid Fuel Heating Device: Any wood, coal, or other similar organic fuel burning device, including but not limited to fireplaces where masonry or factory built, fireplace inserts and stoves, wood stoves (room heaters), central furnaces, and combinations of these devices.
- V. Structural component: A component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).
- W. Technically Exhaustive: An inspection involving the extensive use of measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, and other means to develop scientific or engineering findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- X. Under Floor Crawl Space: The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the lowest floor structural component.

.2003 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. Home inspections performed according to this Chapter shall provide the client with a better understanding of the property conditions, as observed at the time of the home inspection.
- B. Home inspectors shall:
 - 1. Provide the client with a written inspection contract, whenever possible, which shall:
 - (a) State that the home inspection is to be done in accordance with the Standards of Practice of the West Virginia Association of Home Inspectors.
 - (b) Describe what inspection services will be provided and their cost.
 - (c) State that the inspection is limited to only those systems or components agreed upon by the client and the inspector, and
 - (d) Contain copies of the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.
 - 2. Observe and inspect readily visible and accessible installed systems and components listed in this Chapter, and/or as contractually agreed upon.
 - 3. Submit a written report to the client which shall:
 - (a) Describe those systems and components specified to be described in Sections .2006 through .2015 and/or as contractually agreed upon.
 - (b) State which systems and components designated for inspection in this Section have been inspected, and state any systems or components designated for inspection that were not inspected, and the reason for not inspecting.
 - (c) State any systems or components so inspected that do not function as intended, allowing for normal wear and tear, or adversely affect the habitability of the dwelling; and
 - (d) State the name, license number, and contain the signature of the person conducting the inspection.

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.2003 PURPOSE AND SCOPE (Continued)

- C. This Chapter does not limit home inspectors from:
 - 1. Reporting observations and conditions or rendering opinions of items in addition to those required in Section B of this Rule; or
 - 2. Excluding systems and components from the inspection if requested by the client, and so stated in the written contract.

.2004 GENERAL LIMITATIONS

- A. Home inspections done in accordance with this Chapter are visual and are not technically exhaustive.
- B. This Chapter applies to residential resale buildings.

.2005 GENERAL EXCLUSIONS

- A. Home inspectors are not required to report on:
 - 1. Life expectancy of any component or system;
 - 2. The cause of the need for a repair;
 - 3. The methods, materials, and costs of corrections;
 - 4. The suitability of the property for any specialized use;
 - 5. Compliance or non-compliance with codes, ordinances, statutes, regulatory requirements, special utility, insurance or restrictions;
 - 6. The market value of the property or its marketability;
 - 7. The advisability or inadvisability of purchase of the property;
 - 8. Any component or system that was not inspected;
 - 9. The presence or absence of pests such as wood damaging organisms, rodents or insects;
 - 10. Cosmetic items, underground items not permanently installed.
 - 11. Hidden or latent defects; or
 - 12. Items not visible for inspection.
- B. Home inspectors are not required to:
 - 1. Offer warranties or guarantees of any kind;
 - 2. Calculate the strength, adequacy, or efficiency of any system or component;
 - 3. Enter any area or perform any procedure that may damage the property or its components or be dangerous to the home inspector or other persons;
 - 4. Operate any system or component that is shut down or otherwise inoperable;
 - 5. Operate any system or component that does not respond to normal operating controls;
 - 6. Disturb insulation, move personal items, panels, furniture, equipment, plant life, soil, snow, ice, or debris that obstructs access or visibility;
 - 7. Determine the presence or absence of any suspected adverse environmental condition or hazardous substance, including but not limited to toxins such as asbestos, radon and lead, carcinogens, noise, contaminants in the building or in soil, water and air;
 - 8. Determine the effectiveness of any system installed to control or remove suspected hazardous substances;
 - 9. Predict future condition, including but not limited to failure of components.
 - 10. Project operating costs of components;
 - 11. Evaluate acoustical characteristics of any system or component; or
 - 12. Inspect special equipment or accessories that are not listed as components to be inspected in this Chapter.

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.2005 GENERAL EXCLUSIONS (Continued)

- C. Home inspectors shall not:
 - 1. Offer or perform any act or service contrary to law;
 - 2. Report on the market value of the property or its marketability;
 - 3. Report on the advisability or inadvisability of purchase or the property;
 - 4. Report on any component or system that was not inspected;
 - 5. Report on the presence or absence of pests such as wood damaging organisms, rodents or insects. However, the home inspector may advise the client of damages to the building and recommend further inspection by a licensed wood destroying insect inspector.
 - 6. At the time of the inspection or for a period of twelve (12) months thereafter, advertise or solicit to perform repair services or any other type of service on the home upon which he has performed a home inspection.

.2006 STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

- A. The home inspector shall inspect structural components including:
 - 1. Foundation;
 - 2. Floors;
 - 3. Walls;
 - 4. Columns or piers;
 - 5. Ceilings; and
 - 6. Roofs.
- B. The home inspector shall describe the type of:
 - 1. Foundation;
 - 2. Floor structure;
 - 3. Wall structure;
 - 4. Columns or piers;
 - 5. Ceiling structure; and
 - 6. Roof structure.
- C. The home inspector shall:
 - 1. Probe structural components only where deterioration is visible, except where probing would damage any surface;
 - 2. Enter under floor crawl spaces, basements, and attic spaces, except when access is obstructed, when entry could damage the property, or when dangerous or adverse situations are suspected;
 - 3. Report the methods used to inspect under floor crawl spaces and attics; and
 - 4. Report signs of abnormal or harmful water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building components.

.2007 EXTERIOR

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Wall cladding, flashings and trim;
 - 2. Entryway doors and a representative number of windows;
 - 3. Garage door operators;
 - 4. Decks, balconies, stoops, steps, areaways, porches, and applicable railings;
 - 5. Eaves, soffits, and fascias; and
 - 6. Vegetation, grading, drainage, driveways, patios, walkways, and retaining walls with respect to their effect on the condition of the building.

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.2007 EXTERIOR (Continued)

- B. The home inspector shall:
 - 1. Describe wall cladding materials;
 - 2. Operate all entryway doors and a representative number of windows;
 - 3. Operate garage doors manually or by using permanently installed controls for any garage door operator; and
 - 4. Report whether or not any garage door operator will automatically reverse or stop and if so equipped with said safety feature.
- C. The home inspector is not required to inspect:
 - 1. Storm windows, storm doors, screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories;
 - 2. Fences;
 - 3. Presence of safety glazing in doors and windows;
 - 4. Garage door operator remote control transmitters;
 - 5. Geological conditions;
 - 6. Soil conditions;
 - 7. Recreational facilities (including spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment or athletic facilities);
 - 8. Detached buildings or structures;
 - 9. Presence or condition of buried fuel storage tanks.

.2008 ROOFING

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Roof coverings;
 - 2. Roof drainage systems;
 - 3. Flashings;
 - 4. Skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations; and
 - 5. Signs of leaks or abnormal condensation on building components.
- B. The home inspector shall:
 - 1. Describe the type of roof covering materials; and
 - 2. Report the methods used to observe the roofing.
- C. The home inspector is not required to:
 - 1. Walk on the roofing; or
 - 2. Inspect attached accessories including but not limited to solar systems, antennae and lightening arrestors.

.2009 PLUMBING

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Interior water supply and distribution systems, including piping materials, supports, insulation; fixtures and faucets; functional flow; leaks; and cross connections.
 - 2. Interior drain, waste and vent system, including: traps, drain, waste and vent piping; piping supports and pipe insulation; leaks and functional drainage;
 - 3. Hot water systems including: water heating equipment; normal operating controls; automatic safety controls; and chimneys, flues and vents;
 - 4. Fuel storage and distribution systems including interior fuel storage equipment, supply piping, venting and supports; leaks; and
 - 5. Sump pumps.

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.2009 PLUMBING (Continued)

- B. The home inspector shall describe:
 - 1. Water supply and distribution piping materials;
 - 2. Drain, waste and vent piping materials;
 - 3. Water heating equipment; and
 - 4. Location of main water supply shut-off device.
- C. The home inspector shall operate all plumbing and plumbing fixtures, including their faucets and all exterior faucets attached to the house, except where the flow end of the faucet is connected to an appliance or winterized equipment.
- D. The home inspector is not required to:
 - 1. State the effectiveness of anti-siphon devices;
 - 2. Determine whether water supply and waste disposal systems are public or private;
 - 3. Operate automatic safety controls;
 - 4. Operate any valve except water closet flush valves, fixture faucets and hose faucets;
 - 5. Inspect:
 - 1) Water conditioning systems;
 - 2) Fire and lawn sprinkler system;
 - 3) On-site water supply quantity and quality;
 - 4) On-site waste disposal systems;
 - 5) Foundation irrigation systems;
 - 6) Spas;
 - 7) Swimming pools;
 - 8) Solar water heating equipment; or
 - 6. Inspect the system for proper sizing, design or use of proper materials.

.2010 ELECTRICAL

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Service entrance conductors;
 - 2. Service equipment, ground equipment, main overcurrent device and main and distribution panels;
 - 3. Amperage and voltage ratings of the service;
 - 4. Branch circuit conductors, their over-current devices and the compatibility of the ampacities and voltages.
 - 5. The operation of a representative number of installed ceiling fans, lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles located inside the house, garage and on the dwelling's exterior walls.
 - 6. The polarity and grounding of all receptacles within six feet (6') of interior plumbing fixtures, and all receptacles in the garage or carport and on the exterior of inspected structures;
 - 7. The operation of ground fault circuit interrupters; and
 - 8. Smoke detectors.
- B. The home inspector shall describe:
 - 1. Service amperage and voltage;
 - 2. Service entry conductor materials;
 - 3. Service type as being overhead or underground; and
 - 4. Location of main and distribution panels.
- C. The home inspector shall report any observed aluminum branch circuit wiring.
- D. The home inspector shall report on the presence or absence of smoke detectors and operate their test function, if accessible, except when detectors are part of a central system.

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.2010 ELECTRICAL (Continued)

- E. The home inspector is not required to:
 - 1. Insert any tool, probe, or testing device inside the panels;
 - 2. Test or operate any over-current device except ground fault circuit interrupters;
 - 3. Dismantle any electrical device or control other than to remove the dead front covers of the main and auxiliary distribution panels; or
 - 4. Inspect:
 - (a) Low voltage systems;
 - (b) Security system devices, heat detectors or carbon monoxide detectors;
 - (c) Telephone, security, cable TV, intercoms or other ancillary wiring that is not part of the primary electrical distribution system; or
 - (d) Built-in vacuum equipment.

.2011 HEATING

- A. The home inspector shall inspect permanently installed heating systems including:
 - 1. Heating equipment;
 - 2. Normal operating controls;
 - 3. Automatic safety controls;
 - 4. Chimney, flues and vents, where readily visible.
 - 5. Solid fuel heating devices including fireplaces;
 - 6. Heat distribution systems including fans, pumps, ducts and piping, with associated supports, insulation, air filters, registers, radiators, fan coil units, convectors; and
 - 7. The presence of an installed heat source in each room.
- B. The home inspector shall describe:
 - 1. Energy source; and
 - 2. Heating equipment and distribution type.
- C. The home inspector shall operate the systems using normal operating controls.
- D. The home inspector shall open readily open able access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.
- E. The home inspector is not required to:
 - 1. Operate heating systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage;
 - 2. Operate automatic safety controls;
 - 3. Ignite or extinguish solid fuel fires; or
 - 4. Inspect:
 - (a) The interior of flues;
 - (b) Fireplace insert flue connections;
 - (c) Humidifiers;
 - (d) Electronic air filters; or
 - (e) The uniformity or adequacy of heat supplies to the various rooms.

.2012 CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Central air conditioning systems including:
 - 2. Cooling and air handling equipment;
 - 3. Normal operating controls;
 - 4. Fans, pumps, ducts and piping, with associated supports, dampers, insulation, air filters, registers, fan coil units; and
 - 5. The presence of an installed cooling source in each room.

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.2012 CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING (Continued)

- B. The home inspector shall describe:
 - 1. Energy sources; and
 - 2. Cooling equipment type.
- C. The home inspector shall operate the systems using normal operating controls.
- D. The home inspector shall open readily open able access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.
- E. The home inspector is not required to:
 - 1. Operate cooling systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage;
 - 2. Inspect non-central air conditioners; or
 - 3. Inspect the uniformity or adequacy of cool-air supply to the various rooms.

.2013 INTERIORS

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Walls, ceiling and floors;
 - 2. Steps, stairways, balconies and railings;
 - 3. Countertops and a representative number of cabinets and drawers; and
 - 4. A representative number of doors and windows.
- B. The home inspector shall:
 - 1. Operate a representative number of windows and interior doors; and
 - 2. Report signs of abnormal or harmful water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building components.
- C. The home inspector is not required to inspect:
 - 1. Paint, wallpaper and other finish treatments on the interior walls, ceilings and floors;
 - 2. Carpeting; or
 - 3. Draperies, blinds or other window treatments.

.2014 INSULATION AND VENTILATION

- A. The home inspector shall inspect:
 - 1. Insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces;
 - 2. Ventilation of attics and foundation areas;
 - 3. Kitchen, bathroom and laundry venting system; and
 - 4. The operation of any readily accessible attic ventilation fan and, when temperature permits, the operation of any readily accessible thermostatic control.
- B. The home inspector shall describe:
 - 1. Insulation in unfinished spaces; and
 - 2. Absence of insulation in unfinished space at conditioned surfaces.
- C. The home inspector is not required to report on:
 - 1. Concealed insulation and vapor retarders; or
 - 2. Venting equipment that is integral with household appliances.

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.2015 BUILT-IN KITCHEN APPLIANCES

- A. The home inspector shall inspect and operate the basic functions of the following kitchen appliances:
 - 1. Permanently installed dishwasher; through its normal cycle;
 - 2. Range, cook top and permanently installed oven;
 - 3. Trash compactor;
 - 4. Garbage disposal;
 - 5. Ventilation equipment or range hood; and
 - 6. Permanently installed microwave oven.
- B. The home inspector is not required to inspect:
 - 1. Clocks, timers, self-cleaning oven function, or thermostats for calibration or automatic operation;
 - 2. Non built-in appliances such as clothes washers and dryers; or
 - 3. Refrigeration units such as freezers, refrigerators and ice makers.
- C. The home inspector is not required to operate:
 - 1. Appliances in use; or
 - 2. Any appliance that is shut down or otherwise inoperable.

Code of Ethics

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CHAPTER THREE
CODE OF ETHICS

1. Licensees shall discharge their duties with fidelity to the public and to their clients and with fairness and impartiality to all.
2. Opinions expressed by licensees shall only be based on their education, experience and honest convictions.
3. A licensee shall not disclose any information about the results of an inspection without the approval of the client for whom the inspection was performed, or the client's designated representative unless an unsafe condition is discovered.
4. No licensee shall accept compensation or any other consideration from more than one interested party for the same service without consent of all interested parties.
5. No licensee shall accept commissions or allowances from other parties dealing with the client in connection with the inspection report
6. No licensee shall offer commissions, fees or payment to other parties dealing with the client for the referral of the inspector to the client for an inspection.
7. No licensee shall express, within the context of an inspection, an appraisal or opinion of the market value of the inspected property.
8. Before the execution of a contract to perform a home inspection, a licensee shall disclose to the client any interest in a business that may affect the client.
9. No licensee shall allow his or her interest in any business to affect the quality or results of the inspection work that the licensee may be called upon to perform.
10. Licensees shall not engage in false or misleading advertising or otherwise misrepresent any matters to the public.
11. Licensees shall bear a good reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and integrity.