

The Standards of Practice and Code  
of Ethics of THE AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF HOME INSPECTORS®

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The Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the American Society of Home Inspectors

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS** ASHI Standards of Practice Effective October 15, 2006 © Copyright 2006 American Society of Home

### **HOME INSPECTION**

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

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

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

**Code of Ethics** ASHI's Code of Ethics stresses the home inspector's responsibility to report the results of the

inspection in a strictly fair, impartial, and professional manner, avoiding conflicts of interest.

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

**Find local ASHI Members by calling 1-800-743-2744 or visiting the ASHI Web site at [www.ashi.org](http://www.ashi.org).**

2

Page ASHI Standards of Practice . . . . . 3

Section Description

1. Introduction . . . . .	3
2. Purpose and Scope . . . . .	3
3. Structural System . . . . .	3
4. Exterior . . . . .	3
5. Roofing . . . . .	4
6. Plumbing . . . . .	4
7. Electrical . . . . .	4
8. Heating . . . . .	5
9. Air Conditioning . . . . .	5
10. Interiors . . . . .	5
11. Insulation and Ventilation . . . . .	5
12. Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Burning Appliances and Exclusions . . . . .	5
13. General Limitations . . . . .	6
Glossary . . . . .	7
Code of Ethics . . . . .	8

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The Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the American Society of Home Inspectors

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**B.** designing or specifying repairs, provided the

The American Society of Home Inspectors®, Inc. (ASHI®) is a not-for-profit professional society established in 1976. Membership in ASHI is voluntary and its members are private home inspectors. ASHI’s objectives include promotion of excellence within the profession and continual improvement of its members’ inspection services to the public. **C.** excluding systems and components from the inspection if requested by the client.

## 3. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

### 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

#### 3.1 The inspector shall:

**A.** inspect: **2.1** The purpose of the Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for home inspectors who subscribe to these Standards of Practice. Home

inspections performed to these Standards of Practice are intended to provide the client with objective information regarding the condition of the systems and components of the home as inspected at the time of the home inspection. Redundancy in the description of the requirements, limitations, and exclusions regarding the scope of the home inspection is provided for emphasis only.

1. structural components including the foundation and framing. 2. by probing a representative number of structural components where deterioration is suspected or where clear indications of possible deterioration exist. Probing is NOT required when probing would damage any finished surface or where no deterioration is visible or presumed to exist. **B.** describe:

**2.2 Inspectors shall:**

**A.** adhere to the Code of Ethics of the American Society of Home Inspectors. **B.** inspect readily accessible, visually observable, installed systems and components listed in these

1. the methods used to inspect under-floor crawl spaces and attics. 2. the foundation. 3. the floor structure. 4. the wall structure. Standards of Practice. 5. the ceiling structure. **C.** report:

6. the roof structure. 1. those systems and components inspected that, in the professional judgment of the inspector, are not functioning properly, significantly deficient, unsafe, or are near

**3.2 The inspector is NOT required to:**

**A.** provide any engineering or architectural services or analysis. the end of their service lives.

**B.** offer an opinion as to the adequacy of any 2. recommendations to correct, or monitor for structural system or component.

future correction, the deficiencies reported in 2.2.C.1, or items needing further

**4. EXTERIOR**

evaluation. (Per Exclusion 13.2.A.5

**4.1 The inspector shall:** inspectors are NOT required to determine methods, materials, or costs of corrections.) 3. reasoning or explanation as to the nature of the deficiencies reported in 2.2.C.1, that are not self-evident. 4. systems and components designated for inspection in these Standards of Practice that were present at the time of the home inspection but were not inspected and the

**A.** inspect:

1. siding, flashing and trim. 2. all exterior doors. 3. attached or adjacent decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings. 4. eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level. reason(s) they were not inspected. 5. vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and

**2.3 These Standards of Practice are not intended to limit**

**inspectors from:** **A.** including other inspection services or systems and components in addition to those required in Section 2.2.B.

retaining walls that are likely to adversely affect the building. 6. adjacent or entryway walkways, patios, and driveways. **B.** describe:

1. siding.

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3

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EXTERIOR 4.2, Continued

4

ASHI Standards of Practice Effective October 15, 2006 © Copyright 2006 American Society of Home Inspectors, Inc.® All rights reserved **4.2 The**

**inspector is NOT required to inspect:**

**A.** screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories. **B.** fences. **C.** geological and/or soil conditions. **D.** recreational facilities. **E.** outbuildings other than garages and carports. **F.** seawalls, break-walls, and docks. **G.** erosion control and earth stabilization measures.

**5. ROOFING**

**5.1 The inspector shall:**

**A.** inspect:

1. roofing materials. 2. roof drainage systems. 3. flashing. 4. skylights, chimneys, and roof penetrations. **B.** describe:

1. roofing materials. 2. methods used to inspect the roofing.

**5.2 The inspector is NOT required to inspect:**

**A.** antennae. **B.** interiors of flues or chimneys that are not readily accessible. **C.** other installed accessories.

**6. PLUMBING**

**6.1 The inspector shall:**

**A.** inspect:

1. interior water supply and distribution systems including all fixtures and faucets. 2. drain, waste, and vent systems including all fixtures. 3. water heating equipment and hot water supply system. 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, drain, waste, and vent piping materials. 2. water heating equipment including energy source(s). 3. location of main water and fuel shut-off valves.

**6.2 The inspector is NOT required to:**

**A.** inspect:

1. clothes washing machine connections. 2. interiors of flues or chimneys that are not readily accessible. 3. wells, well pumps, or water storage related equipment. 4. water conditioning systems. 5. solar water heating systems. 6. fire and lawn sprinkler systems. 7. private waste disposal systems. **B.** determine:

1. whether water supply and waste disposal systems are public or private. 2. water supply quantity or quality. **C.** operate automatic safety controls or manual stop valves.

**7. ELECTRICAL**

**7.1 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. overcurrent protection devices. 8. a representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles. 9. ground fault circuit interrupters. **B.** describe:

1. amperage and voltage rating of the service. 2. location of main disconnect(s) and sub panels. 3. presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring. 4. presence or absence of smoke detectors. 5. wiring methods.

**7.2 The inspector is NOT required to:**

**A.** inspect:

1. remote control devices. 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. **B.** measure amperage, voltage, or impedance.

## **8. HEATING**

### **10.2 The inspector is NOT required to inspect:**

#### **8.1 The inspector shall:**

**A.** paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments.

**A.** open readily openable access panels.

**B.** carpeting.

**B.** inspect:

**C.** window treatments.

1. installed heating equipment.

**D.** central vacuum systems.

2. vent systems, flues, and chimneys.

**E.** household appliances.

**C.** describe:

**F.** recreational facilities.

1. energy source(s). 2. heating systems.

### **8.2 The inspector is NOT required to:**

**A.** inspect:

1. interiors of flues or chimneys that are not

readily accessible. 2. heat exchangers. 3. humidifiers or dehumidifiers. 4. electronic air filters. 5. solar space heating systems.

## **11. INSULATION & VENTILATION**

### **11.1 The inspector shall:**

**A.** inspect:

1. insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished

spaces. 2. ventilation of attics and foundation areas. 3. mechanical ventilation systems. **B.** describe:

1. insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces. **B.** determine heat supply adequacy or distribution balance.

2. absence of insulation in unfinished spaces at conditioned surfaces.

## **9. AIR CONDITIONING**

### **11.2 The inspector is NOT required to disturb insulation.**

See 13.2.A.11 and 13.2.A.12. **9.1 The inspector shall:**

**A.** open readily openable access panels.

## **12. FIREPLACES AND SOLID FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES B. inspect:**

**12.1 The inspector shall:** 1. central and through-wall equipment.

**A.** inspect: 2. distribution systems.

1. system components. **C.** describe:

2. chimney and vents. 1. energy source(s).

**B.** describe: 2. cooling systems.

1. fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances. **9.2 The inspector is NOT required to:**

2. chimneys. **A.** inspect electronic air filters.

**12.2 The inspector is NOT required to:** **B.** determine cooling supply adequacy or distribution balance. **C.** inspect window air conditioning units.

**A.** inspect:

1. interiors of flues or chimneys. 2. firescreens and doors.

## **10. INTERIORS**

3. seals and gaskets.

**10.1 The inspector shall inspect:**

**A.** walls, ceilings, and floors. **B.** steps, stairways, and railings. **C.** countertops and a representative number of installed cabinets. **D.** a representative number of doors and windows. **E.** garage doors and garage door operators. 4. automatic fuel feed devices. 5. mantles and fireplace surrounds. 6. combustion make-up air devices. 7. heat distribution assists (gravity fed and fan assisted). **B.** ignite or extinguish fires. **C.** determine draft characteristics. **D.** move fireplace inserts and stoves or firebox contents.

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Continue  
d

**13. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS**

**13.1 General limitations:**

**A.** The inspector is NOT required to perform any action or make any determination not specifically stated in these Standards of Practice. **B.** Inspections performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice:  
1. are not technically exhaustive. 2. are not required to identify concealed conditions, latent defects, or consequential damage(s). **C.** These Standards of Practice are applicable to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their garages or carports.

**13.2 General exclusions:**

**A. Inspectors are NOT required to determine:**  
1. conditions of systems or components that are not readily accessible. 2. remaining life expectancy of any system or component. 3. strength, adequacy, effectiveness, or efficiency of any system or component. 4. the 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. the suitability of the property for any specialized use. 8. compliance with regulatory requirements (codes, regulations, laws, ordinances, etc.). 9. market value of the property or its marketability. 10. the advisability of purchase of the property. 11. the presence of potentially hazardous plants or animals including, but not limited to, wood destroying organisms or diseases harmful to humans including molds or mold-like substances. 12. the presence of any environmental hazards including, but not limited to, toxins, carcinogens, noise, and contaminants in soil, water, and air. 13. the effectiveness of any system installed or method utilized to control or remove suspected hazardous substances. 14. operating costs of systems or components. 15. acoustical properties of any system or component. 16. soil conditions relating to geotechnical or hydrologic specialties.

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

1. or perform any act or service contrary to law. 2. or perform engineering services. 3. or perform any trade or any professional service other than home inspection. 4. warranties or guarantees of any kind. **C.**

**Inspectors are NOT required to operate:**

1. any system or component that is shut down

or otherwise inoperable. 2. any system or component that does not respond to normal operating controls. 3. shut-off valves or manual stop valves. **D. Inspectors are NOT required to enter:**

1. any area that will, in the opinion of the inspector, likely be dangerous to the inspector or other persons or damage the property or its systems or components. 2. under-floor crawl spaces or attics that are

not readily accessible. **E. 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. items that are not installed. 3. installed decorative items. 4. items in areas that are not entered in

accordance with 13.2.D. 5. detached structures other than garages

and carports. 6. common elements or common areas in

multi-unit housing, such as condominium properties or cooperative housing. **F.**

**Inspectors are NOT required to:**

1. perform any procedure or operation that will, in the opinion of the inspector, likely be dangerous to the inspector or other persons or damage the property or its systems or components. 2. describe or report on any system or

component that is not included in these Standards and was not inspected. 3. move personal property, furniture, equipment,

plants, soil, snow, ice, or debris. 4. dismantle any system or component, except

as explicitly required by these Standards of Practice.

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The Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the American Society of Home Inspectors

# ASHI STANDARDS OF PRACTICE GLOSSARY OF ITALICIZED TERMS

## **Alarm Systems**

**Inspect** Warning devices installed or free-

To examine any system or component standing including but not limited to of a building in accordance with these smoke detectors, carbon monoxide Standards of Practice, using normal detectors, flue gas, and other spillage operating controls and opening readily detectors, and security equipment openable access panels

## **Automatic Safety Controls**

**Inspector** Devices designed and installed to

A person hired to examine any system protect systems and components from or component of a building in accordance unsafe conditions with these Standards of Practice

## **Component**

**Installed** A part of a system

Attached such that removal requires tools

## **Decorative**

**Normal Operating Controls** Ornamental; not required for the proper

Devices such as thermostats, switches, operation of the essential systems and or valves intended to be operated by the components of a home



homeowner

**Describe**

**Readily Accessible** To identify (in writing) a system or Available for visual inspection without component by its type or other requiring moving of personal property, distinguishing characteristics dismantling, destructive measures, or

**Dismantle** To take apart or remove any component, any action that will likely involve risk to persons or property device, or piece of equipment that

**Readily Openable Access Panel** would not be taken apart or removed by A panel provided for homeowner a homeowner in the course of normal inspection and maintenance that is maintenance readily accessible, within normal reach,

**Engineering** The application of scientific knowledge can be removed by one person, and is not sealed in place for the design, control, or use of

**Recreational Facilities** building structures, equipment, or Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming apparatus pools, exercise, entertainment, athletic,

**Further Evaluation** Examination and analysis by a qualified playground or other similar equipment, and associated accessories professional, tradesman, or service

**Report** technician beyond that provided by the Communicate in writing home inspection

**Representative Number Home Inspection**

One component per room for multiple The process by which an inspector similar interior components such as visually examines the readily accessible windows, and electric receptacles; one systems and components of a home and component on each side of the building which describes those systems and for multiple similar exterior components components in accordance with these Standards of Practice

**Roof Drainage Systems** Components used to carry water off a **Household Appliances**

roof and away from a building Kitchen, laundry, and similar appliances, whether installed or free-standing

**Shut Down** A state in which a system or component cannot be operated by normal operating controls  
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**7 Siding** Exterior wall covering and cladding; such as: aluminum, asphalt, brick, cement/asbestos, EIFS, stone, stucco, veneer, vinyl, wood, etc.

**Solid Fuel Burning Appliances** A hearth and fire chamber or similar prepared place in which a fire may be built and that 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 investigation that involves dismantling, the extensive use of advanced techniques, measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, or other means

**Under-floor Crawl Space** The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the floor

**Unsafe** A condition in a readily accessible, installed system or component that is judged to be a significant risk of bodily injury during normal, day-to-day use; the risk may be due to damage, deterioration, improper installation, or a change in accepted residential construction standards

**Wiring Methods** Identification of electrical conductors or wires by their general type, such as non-metallic sheathed cable, armored cable, or knob and tube, etc.

# ASHI® CODE OF ETHICS For the Home Inspection Profession

Integrity, obligations adopted, honesty, this of Code ethical and to provide conduct, objectivity high for are the ethical fundament principles to profession. safeguard embodied the The public Membership by this and Code, the of profession. which ASHI sets ha forth

Inspectors shall comply with this Code, shall avoid association with any enterprise whose practices violate this Code, and shall strive to improve the integrity, reputation, and practice of the home inspection profession.

## **1. Inspectors shall avoid conflicts of interest or activities that compromise, or appear to compromise, professional independence, objectivity, or inspection integrity.**

- A. Inspectors shall not inspect properties for compensation in which they have, or expect to have, a financial interest.
- B. Inspectors shall not inspect properties under contingent arrangements whereby any compensation or future referrals are dependent on reported findings or on the sale of a property.
- C. Inspectors shall not directly or indirectly compensate realty agents, or other parties having a financial interest in closing or settlement of real estate transactions, for the referral of inspections or for inclusion of inspectors, preferred providers, or similar arrangements.
- D. Inspectors shall not receive compensation for an inspection from more than one party unless agreed to by the client(s).
- E. Inspectors shall not accept compensation, directly or indirectly, for recommending contractors, services, or products to inspection clients or other parties having an interest in inspected properties.
- F. Inspectors shall not repair, replace, or upgrade, for compensation, systems or components covered by ASHI Standards of Practice, for one year after the inspection.

## **2. Inspectors shall act in good faith toward each client and other interested parties.**

- A. Inspectors shall perform services and express opinions based on genuine conviction and only within their areas of education, training, or experience.

B. Inspectors shall be objective in their reporting and not knowingly understate or overstate the significance of reported conditions.

C. Inspectors shall not disclose inspection results or client information without client approval.

Inspectors, at their discretion, may disclose observed immediate safety hazards to occupants exposed to such hazards, v

**3. Inspectors shall avoid activities that may harm the public, discredit themselves, or reduce public confidence in the profession.**

A. Advertising, marketing, and promotion of inspectors' services or qualifications shall not be fraudulent, false, deceptive, or misleading.

B. Inspectors shall report substantive and willful violations of this Code to the Society.