



## STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the NSHI Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for performing an inspection of a single-family to a four-family dwelling. The Standards set minimum requirements for describing and reporting conditions observed. The Standards define and clarify terms, procedures, scope, conditions, and limitations as they relate to an NSHI Inspection and Report.

### TERMS

**Client:** A person who engages the services of a home inspector for an inspection assignment.

**Component:** A part of a system.

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

**Home Inspection Report:** A written evaluation prepared and issued by a home inspector upon completion of a home inspection that meets the standards of practice as established by NSHI.

**Inspect:** To visually examine readily accessible systems and components of a building in accordance with these Standards of Practice, using normal operating controls and opening readily accessible access panels.

**Pre-inspection Agreement:** An agreement signed by the client prior to the start of the home inspection that contains, at a minimum, the full name and address of the client, the address of the home to be inspected, the date and time of the home inspection, the price of the home inspection, and the scope and limitations of the inspection.

**Roof Drainage Systems:** Components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

**Significantly Deficient:** Unsafe or not functioning.

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

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

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

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

**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 system or component that poses a significant risk of personal injury or property damage during normal, day-to-day use.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a home inspection is to provide the client with information regarding the condition of the systems and components of the home as they existed at the time of the home inspection. The Home Inspection Report communicates the information to the client through a written summary that describes the general conditions of the building systems and components along with items deemed significantly deficient.

### SCOPE

The scope of the inspection is a visual observation of the readily accessible areas of the building, components, and systems that is limited to the readily accessible and visible areas and the systems identified as follows: Site/ Grounds, Structural System/ Foundation, Exterior, Roof, Plumbing,

Electrical, Heating System, Cooling System, Interior, Insulation and Ventilation, and Fireplaces / Solid Burning Appliances.

### **LIMITATIONS**

The inspector will not dismantle and/or move equipment, systems, furniture, appliances, floor coverings, finished or fastened surfaces or components, personal property or other items to conduct this inspection or otherwise to expose concealed or inaccessible conditions. The inspection will not include destructive testing of any kind. Systems and conditions that are not within the scope of the inspection include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Environmental hazards including the presence or absence of asbestos, lead paint, radon, or urea formaldehyde insulation
- ✓ Water or air quality
- ✓ Presence of toxic or carcinogenic matter emitted from the ground, building materials, presence in water, in air supply or from the operation of any equipment.
- ✓ Items that are obstructed, inaccessible or not in plain view.
- ✓ Mold or mold type.
- ✓ Animal or insect infestations.

The following components or systems also fall outside the scope of the inspection: security systems; appliances; playground and recreational equipment; swimming pools; hot tubs/spas; lawn sprinkler systems; intercom and audio/video systems and below ground drainage systems; antennas; central vacuums; solar systems; water softeners and filters; wells; septic systems; latent defects; adequacy of system designs; zoning or building code compliance; and any items considered to be cosmetic in nature.

### **WARRANTIES AND GUARANTEES:**

The written home inspection report is not intended to be used as a guarantee or warranty, expressed or implied, regarding adequacy, performance, or condition of any inspected building, system or component. Items inspected are not guaranteed to be defect-free, as problems may exist even though signs of such may not be present during the inspection.

The Standards provide minimum guidelines for the Inspector, and outline what the Inspector should observe, identify, inspect, and describe. The guidelines provide the minimum contents of a written report and are not intended to limit the Inspector from performing additional inspection services.

### **INSPECTOR QUALIFICATIONS**

NSHI members have demonstrated extensive knowledge of new home inspection by acquiring at least 90-hours of accredited home inspector education and by passing the NSHI Exam, which is a national exam sponsored by NSHI. Members with the designation "full members" have completed or participated in at least 100 inspections. Members are required to obtain approved continuing education to maintain their membership.

### **STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**

The following Standards provide guidelines for the NSHI Inspector and outline what the Inspector should observe, identify, inspect, and describe. The guidelines provide the minimum contents of a written report and are not intended to limit the Inspector from performing additional inspection services.

### **SITE/GROUNDS**

- Inspect and describe the ground cover and vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls on the property when any of these are likely to adversely affect the building.
- Inspect and describe walkways, patios (contiguous to the foundation), and driveways leading to dwelling entrances; identify conditions that are hazardous, or could adversely affect the dwelling.

- **LIMITATIONS:**
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Inspect property fences that do not adversely affect the building.
    - Evaluate the condition of shrubs, trees and other vegetation that do not adversely affect the building.

## **STRUCTURAL SYSTEM/FOUNDATION**

- Inspect and describe the condition of the visible materials of foundation walls and framing. Report the methods used to inspect the under-floor crawl space, floor, wall, ceiling, roof, structure and report the methods used to inspect the attic.
- **LIMITATIONS:**
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Determine the adequacy of any structural system or component
    - Provide architectural or engineering recommendations.

## **EXTERIOR SYSTEMS**

- Inspect the exterior wall covering, flashing, trim, all exterior doors, attached decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings, the eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
- **LIMITATIONS:**
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Inspect or report on free-standing decks or other structures that are not attached to the dwelling.
    - Report on the adequacy of storm windows or doors.

## **ROOF COMPONENTS**

- Inspect the roof covering, the roof drainage systems (gutters/downspouts), the flashings, the skylights, chimneys, and roof penetrations; and describe the roof covering and report the methods used to inspect the roof (e.g. from ground, with binoculars, from ladder, etc.). Identify and report the roof style and report areas that could not be inspected.
- **LIMITATIONS:**
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Walk on roof or perform any tasks that could be dangerous.
    - Certify that the roof is free of leaks.
    - Report on accessory items such as antennas or solar panels.
    - Determine or estimate the remaining life of roof covering.

## **PLUMBING SYSTEMS**

- Describe in detail the interior water supply and distribution including all fixtures and faucets, drains, waste and vent systems including all fixtures, the water heating equipment, the vent systems, flues, and chimneys, the fuel storage and fuel distribution systems, the drainage sumps, sump pumps, and related piping, and the location of main water and main fuel shut-off valves.
- **LIMITATIONS:**
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Operate systems that have been shutdown or winterized.
    - Operate or test main shut-off valves.

## **ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS**

- Inspect the service drop, the service entrance conductors, cables, and raceways, the service equipment and main disconnects, the service grounding, the interior components of service panels and sub panels, the conductors, the over-current protection devices, installed lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles, the ground fault circuit interrupters.

- Describe the amperage and voltage rating of the service, the location of main disconnects and sub panels, the wiring methods; and report on the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring and on the absence of smoke detectors.
- LIMITATIONS:
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Inspect equipment that is not readily accessible, nor dismantle equipment or components.
    - Activate electrical systems or branch circuits that are not energized.
    - Test all switches, receptacles, or fixtures.
    - Move objects to gain access to electrical outlets or panels.
    - Operate overload protection devices except GFCI breakers.
    - Operate or test smoke detectors

## **HEATING SYSTEMS**

- Inspect the installed heating equipment, the vent systems, flues, and chimneys; and describe the energy source, the heating method by its distinguishing characteristics.
- Report the type of fuel and the estimated or approximate age. Operate and report the condition of thermostats. Inspect and report the condition of a representative number of supply and return openings.
- LIMITATIONS:
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Operate a heating system when the operation could cause damage to the system.
    - Activate equipment that has been “shut-down” or will not respond to thermostat controls.
    - Examine equipment by any means other than the service panels provided by the manufacturer.
    - Report on the efficiency or adequacy of the system or distribution method.

## **COOLING SYSTEM**

- Inspect the installed central and through-wall cooling equipment; and describe the energy source, the cooling method by its distinguishing characteristics.
- Report the equipment type, size and approximate age (if specified on the service tag). Operate the equipment (weather permitting) by normal control controls and report the condition.
- LIMITATIONS:
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Operate cooling equipment when the ambient temperature has been less than 65 Degrees F within the previous 24 hours.
    - Activate systems that have been “shut-down” or deactivated.
    - Report on the efficiency of the equipment.

## **INTERIOR SYSTEMS**

- Inspect the walls, ceilings, and floors, the steps, stairways, and railings, the countertops, installed cabinets, doors, and windows. Describe and report the condition and any defects or deficiencies.
- Describe style, size and location of an attached garage. Operate garage doors and garage door operators and report any defects or deficiencies.
- LIMITATIONS:
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Move furniture or owners possessions.
    - Operate door openers that have been disconnected from a power source.

## **INSULATION AND VENTILATION**

- Inspect the insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces, the ventilation of attics and foundation areas, the mechanical ventilation systems; and describe the insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces, the absence of insulation in unfinished spaces at conditioned surfaces.
- LIMITATIONS:
  - The inspector is not required to:
    - Enter crawl spaces with headroom less than two feet or where adverse conditions exist.
    - Enter attic spaces where the headroom is less than 3 feet.
    - Enter attic spaces where hazardous conditions exist.
    - Evaluate ventilation adequacy by any means other than visually.
    - Evaluate the efficiency of insulation other than by accepted thickness.
    - Operate sump pumps.

## **FIREPLACES AND SOLID BURNING APPLIANCES**

- Inspect the system components, the vent systems, flues, and chimneys; and describe the fireplaces, solid fuel burning appliances, and the chimneys.
- LIMITATIONS:
  - The Inspector is not required to:
    - Light a fire in the fireplace or ignite a pilot light.
    - Inspect the interiors of flues, fire screens, doors, seals, and gaskets.
    - Determine combustion make-up air devices or draft characteristics.