



## COMMERCIAL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

### **I. Definitions and Scope**

### **II. Standards of Practice**

#### **Mandatory Sections**

1. Foundations, basements, and under-floor areas
2. Exteriors
3. Roof Systems
4. Plumbing Systems
5. Electrical Systems
6. Heating and Cooling Systems
7. Fireplaces and Chimneys
8. Building Interior

### **III. Limitations, Exceptions and Exclusions**

### **III. Glossary of Terms**

## **I. Definitions and Scope**

- A. The inspection is a non-intrusive visual observation to survey the readily accessible, easily visible material components and equipment of the building. The inspection is designed to identify material physical deficiencies in the building's components, systems and equipment as they exist at the time of the inspection.
- B. The term material physical deficiencies means the presence of conspicuous patent defects or material, deferred maintenance of the building's material system, components, or building equipment as observed during the inspection. The definition specifically excludes deficiencies that may be remedied with routine maintenance, miscellaneous minor repairs, and normal operating maintenance, and excludes incidental conditions that generally do not present material physical deficiencies of the building.
- C. These inspections provide inspection guidelines, make public the services provided by private fee-paid inspectors, and define certain terms relating to these inspections.
- D. Unless otherwise agreed between the inspector and the client, these standards shall apply to the primary building(s) and its associated primary parking structure(s) or surfaces. The inspection shall be limited to those specific systems, structures and components that are present and visually accessible. Components and systems shall be operated with normal user operated controls only and as conditions permit. Inspections performed these standards are not intended to be technically exhaustive.
- E. Inspection reports shall describe and identify in written format the inspected systems, structures and components of the building and shall identify those material physical deficiencies covered during the inspection. The inspection report will contain a representative indication of the property condition at the time of the inspection and will be dependent on the information available to the inspector at the time.
- F. The inspector and the client may expressly agree, orally or in writing, to limit or increase the scope of the inspection, including, but not limited to, having an oral consultation in lieu of providing a written inspection report. Such an agreement, however, shall not be deemed a waiver or an increase of any legal Contractual duty or obligation of the inspector, nor shall the inspector's actions be deemed to waive, cancel, or modify these standards.
- G. Inspection reports may contain recommendations regarding conditions reported or recommendations for further evaluation by appropriate persons.

## **II. Standards of Practice**

### **Section 1 – Foundations, Basements, and Under-floor Areas**

#### **A. Items to be reported and identified**

- 1.** Foundation and other support systems.
- 2.** Under-floor ventilation
- 3.** Location of under-floor access openings
- 4.** Wood separation from soils.
- 5.** Presence of drainage systems or sump pumps within foundation footprints.
- 6.** Presence or absence of seismic anchoring and bracing components.

#### **B. The inspector is not required to:**

- 1.** Enter the under-floor areas that are not readily accessible or where entry could cause damage or pose a hazard to the inspector.
- 2.** Move stored items, vegetation or debris, or perform any excavations or other intrusive testing to gain access.
- 3.** Operate or evaluate adequacy of sump pumps or drainage systems.
- 4.** Identify Size, spacing, location or adequacy of foundation bolting and bracing components or reinforcing systems.
- 5.** Perform any intrusive examination or testing, or use any special equipment such as but not limited to levels, probes, or meters.

### **Section 2 – Exteriors**

#### **A. Items to be identified and reported:**

- 1.** Surface grade, landscaping and drainage within six feet of the inspected building or associated primary parking structure(s) or surfaces.
- 2.** Wall cladding, veneers, flashing, trim, eaves, soffits and fascias.
- 3.** Exterior portions of a representative sampling of doors and windows.
- 4.** Attached decks, porches, balconies, stairs, columns, walkways, guard-rails and handrails.

#### **B. The inspector is not required to:**

- 1.** Operate or evaluate any mechanical, electro-mechanical, or underground drainage systems.
- 2.** Operate or evaluate storm windows, storm doors, screening, shutters or awnings.
- 3.** Operate or evaluate remote controlled devices, door operators, or gate openers.

4. Examine detached buildings and structures (other than primary parking structure), patio enclosures, fences, and retaining walls.
5. Examine items not visible from a readily accessible walking surface.
6. Perform a water test, warrant or certify or certify against leakage of all exterior surfaces and components.

### **SECTION 3 – Roof System**

#### **A. Items to be identified and reported:**

1. Roof coverings
2. Flashing, vents, skylight and other penetrations
3. Roof Drainage systems
4. Framing and sheathing
5. Accessibility and access opening(s)
6. insulating materials
7. Ventilation

#### **B. The inspector is not required to:**

1. Walk on the roof surface if, in the opinion of the inspector, there is a possibility of damage to the surface or a hazard to the inspector.
2. Perform a water test. Warrant or certify against roof leakage or predict life expectancy.
3. Enter attic areas that, in the opinion of the inspector, are not accessible or where entry cause damage.
4. Move insulation materials or identify composition or “R” value of insulation material.
5. Activate thermostatically operated fans.

### **SECTION 4 – Plumbing System**

#### **A. Items to be identified and reported:**

1. Supply waste and vent piping
2. Fixtures, faucets and drains
3. Water heating equipment, including combustion air, venting, connections, energy sources, seismic bracing, and temperature and pressure relief valves
4. Functional flow of water supply and functional drainage at fixtures
5. Gas piping and connections
6. Cross connections

#### **B. The inspector is not required to:**

1. Operate any valve other than fixture faucets and hose faucets attached to the building
2. Operate any system, fixture or component that is shut down or disconnected.

3. Examine or verify operation of water supply or pressure boosting systems, including, but not limited to, wells, pumps, tanks, and related equipment.
4. Verify function flow or pressure at any fixture or faucet where the flow end is capped or connected to an appliance, or measure pressure volume or temperature.
5. Examine or operate any sewage disposal system or component including, but not limited to, septic tanks and/or any underground system or portion thereof, or ejector pumps for rain or waste.
6. Examine the overflow devise of any fixture.
7. Evaluate the potability of water, compliance with local or state conservation or energy standards, or proper design or sizing of any water, waste, and venting components, fixtures or piping.
8. Identify whether water supply and waste disposal systems are public or private.
9. Evaluate time to obtain hot water at fixtures, or perform testing of any kind to water heater elements.
10. Examine ancillary systems or components such as, but not limited to: those relating to solar heating, hot water circulation, irrigation, water conditioning, water filtration, swimming pools or spas and related equipment, and fire suppression systems.
11. Test shower pans for leakage or fill any fixture with water during examination.
12. Evaluate the gas supply system for leaks or pressure.
13. Determine effectiveness of anti-siphon, back flow prevention, temperature pressure relief valves, or drain stop devices.
14. Determine whether there are sufficient cleanouts for effective clearing of drains.
15. Evaluate gas, liquid propane, oil, or other storage tanks.

## **SECTION 5 – Electrical Systems**

### **A. Items to be identified and reported:**

1. Service conductors, equipment, and capacity
2. Panels and over-current protective devices.
3. Service and grounding equipment.
4. Wiring types and methods
5. A representative sampling of switches receptacles and light fixtures.
6. Ground Fault circuit interrupters

### **B. The inspector is not required to:**

1. Operate electrical systems or components that, are disconnected or shut down.
2. Disconnect any energized systems or appliance.
3. Remove deadfront covers panels or plates.
4. Operate over-current protection devices, or evaluate compatibility of over current protection devices with the panelboard manufacturer.
5. Examine or test smoke detectors.
6. Operate circuit-interrupters devices.

7. Examine de-icing equipment, or private or emergency electrical supply sources, including, but not limited to: generators, windmills, photo-voltiac solar collectors, or battery or electrical storage facilities.

## **SECTION 6 – Heating and Cooling Systems**

### **A. Items to be identified and reported:**

1. Heating and cooling equipment
2. Venting and combustion equipment
3. Energy source and connections.
4. Heating and cooling distribution systems including a representative sampling of ducting, duct insulation, outlets, radiators, piping systems and valves.
5. Condensate drains.

### **B. The inspector is not required to:**

1. Examine or evaluate condition of heat exchangers.
2. Determine uniformity, temperature, airflow or air balance to any room or building or determine leakage in any distribution component.
3. Examine any distribution component, when access would require steps or a ladder.
4. Examine electric heater elements or heat pump fluid/gas materials, or examine below ground/slab systems, ducts, fuel tanks and related components..
5. Determine or examine thermostat calibration, temperature anticipation, automatic setbacks or clocks, or any sensors.
6. Examine radiant or geothermal heat pump systems.
7. Examine any solar energy heating systems or components.
8. Examine air filtration systems.
9. Operate heat pump systems when the ambient air temperature may damage the equipment, or operate any heat pump system, in emergency heat mode.
10. Examine humidity control systems and components.
11. Operate any heating or cooling equipment.
12. Evaluate the building or equipment for proper percentage of outside or make-up air or evaluate other related devices or controls..
13. Shut down and open any boiler or other related equipment.
14. Examine electrical current, flow, or voltage at any component.
15. Examine or fluids or gases, or leakage.
16. Examine any non-central cooling units, evaporative coolers, gas fired, solar, or geothermal cooling system or food, wine or similar storage cooling system.
17. Examine humidity control systems and components.
18. Enter or climb on cooling towers or evaluate water treatment of cooling towers.
19. Examine temperatures, pressures, or any equipment printouts or displays.

## **SECTION 7 – Fireplaces and Chimneys**

### **A. Items to be identified and reported:**

1. Chimneys, flues, dampers and associated and components.
2. Fireboxes, hearth extensions and permanently installed accessory components.
3. Manufactured solid fuel or gas burning appliances.

B. The inspector is not required to:

1. Determine adequacy of draft, perform a smoke test, or dismantle or remove any component.
2. Examine the structural integrity of fireplaces and chimneys.
3. Examine or operate ancillary or non-permanently installed components.

## **SECTION 8 –Building Interior**

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Walls, ceilings and floors.
2. Security bars, ventilation components, and a representative sample of doors and windows.
3. Stairs, handrails, and guardrails.
4. Permanently installed cabinet surfaces and countertop surfaces.
5. Safety glazing in locations subject to human contact.

B. The inspector is not required to:

1. Operate or evaluate security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including compliance with state, local or federal standards.
2. Determine whether a building or any area of the property is secure from forcible or unauthorized entry.
3. Evaluate the condition of floor, wall or ceiling finishes or coverings, or other surfaces for other than evidence of moisture damage.
4. Examine window or door coverings or treatments.
5. Evaluate fastening or countertops, furniture or cabinets supported by floors, ceilings and/or walls.
6. Evaluate separation or firewalls, ceilings, and floors, including, but not limited to, fire resistance or noise characteristics.
7. Examine the floor surface when concealed by floor coverings.
8. Examine or evaluate ancillary systems or components such as, but not limited to, those related to ingress and egress.

## **SECTION 9 – (optional) – Other built-in appliances and systems**

The inspector may examine any of the following at his/her discretion, as agreed with the client.

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Optional systems, components and appliances specifically examined during the inspection.

2. Basic condition of optional systems, components and appliances specifically included in the inspection.

B. The inspector is not required to:

1. Activate any appliance
2. Determine thermostat calibration, adequacy of heating elements, operate or evaluate self cleaning oven cycles, signal lights, or automatic setback or clocks.
3. Determine leakage from microwave ovens.
4. Determine the presence or operation of backdraft damper devices in exhaust systems.
5. Examine and ancillary or non built-in appliances.

## **SECTION 10 – (OPTIONAL) Pools and Spas**

The inspector may examine the following at his/her discretion, as agreed with the client.

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Location and type of pool or spa inspected.
2. Conditions limiting or otherwise inhibiting the inspection.
3. Enclosure and related gates.
4. Landscaping and drainage related to the inspected pool or spa.
5. Condition of visible portions of systems, structures or components.
6. Normally necessary and present equipment such as lights, GFCI devices, pumps, heaters, filters, and related mechanical and electrical connections.

B. The inspector is not required to:

1. Examine any above ground, movable, freestanding or otherwise non-permanently installed pool or spa, or self contained equipment.
2. Come into contact with pool or spa water to examine the system, structure or components.
3. Determine the adequacy of spa jet water force or bubble effect.
4. Determine structural integrity or leakage of any kind.
5. Evaluate thermostats or their calibration , heating elements, chemical dispensers, water chemistry or conditioning devices, low voltage or computer controls, adequacy of bonding or grounding systems, timers, sweeps or cleaning, pool or spa covers and related components.
6. Operate or evaluate filter backwash systems.
7. Examine accessories, such as, but not limited to, aerators or air blowers, diving or jump boards, ladders, skimmers slides or steps.

## **IV. LIMITATIONS, EXCEPTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS**

A. The inspector may exclude from the inspection any system, structure or component of the building which is inaccessible, concealed from view, or cannot be inspected due to circumstances beyond the control of the inspector, or which the



client has agreed not to be inspected. If an inspector excludes any specific system, structure, or component of the building from the inspection, the inspector shall confirm in the report such specific system, structure, or component of the building not inspected and the reason for such exclusion.

B. The inspector may limit the inspection to individual specific systems, systems, structures or components of the building. In such event, the inspector shall confirm in the report that the inspection has been limited to such individual specific systems, structures, and components of the building.

C. The following are excluded from the scope of an inspection unless otherwise specifically agreed between the client and the inspector.

1. Systems, structures or components not specifically identified in these standards.
2. Certain factors relating to any systems, structures, or components of the building. Including, but not limited to, adequacy, efficiency, durability or remaining useful life.
3. Building Code or zoning ordinance violations.
  4. Geological stability or soil condition or structural stability or engineering analysis.
  5. All wood destroying organisms.
  6. Interior partition walls, tenant improvements and non-building related equipment.
  7. Americans with Disabilities Act Inspections.
  8. Water testing for roof, wall or window leaks. Concealed roofing membrane integrity.
  9. Concealed floor cracks and all underground components.
  10. Product recalls or other such notices.
  11. Specific components noted in the inspection report as being beyond the scope of the inspection.
  12. Thermostatic, motion and time clock controls.
  13. Permits or public records research.
  14. Fire and life safety systems.
  15. Elevator or lifts.
  16. Building security and security systems.
  17. Installation guidelines and manufacturers specifications.
  18. Examination of conditions related to animals, rodents, insects, Wood-destroying insects, organisms, mold and mildew or the damage caused thereby.
  19. Personal property.
  20. Removing equipment or component covers, panels, or plates.
  21. Common areas or systems, structures, or components thereof, including, but not limited to, those of a common interest development.

C. The inspector is not required to perform any of the following as part of an inspection:

1. Move any items or other obstructions such as, but not limited to, equipment, furniture, floor or wall coverings, window coverings, snow, ice, water, debris, and foliage that may obstruct visibility or access.

2. Determine causes for the need of repair or replacement, or specify repair or replacement procedures or materials.
3. Determine existence of latent deficiencies or defects.
4. Dismantle any system, structure, or component, or perform any intrusive or destructive examination, test or analysis.
5. Obtain or review information from any third parties including, but not limited to, government agencies (such as permits), component or system manufacturers (including product defects, recalls or similar notices), contractors, managers, sellers, occupants, neighbors, consultants, homeowner or similar associations, attorneys, agents or brokers.
6. Activate or operate any system or component that is shut down or does not respond to normal user controls, nor access any area or operate any component or system which may jeopardize the safety of the inspector, or any person or thing.
7. Research the history of a property, report on its potential for alteration, modification, extendibility, or its suitability for a specific or proposed use or occupancy.
8. Offer any form of guarantee or warranty.
9. Examine or evaluate the acoustical or other nuisance characteristics of any system, structure, or component of a building, complex,, adjoining properties, or neighborhood.
10. Operate or evaluate any recreational system, structure or component.
11. Operate or evaluate low voltage electrical (less than single phase line voltage, typically 120 volts), antennas, security systems, cable or satellite television,, telephone, remote controls, radio controls, timers, intercoms, computers, photo-electric, motion sensing, or other such similar non primary electrical power devices, components or systems.
12. Use any special equipment to examine any system, structure, or component of a building.
13. Probe or exert pressure on any component system or structure.
14. Examine or evaluate any fire resistive qualities of a system, structure, or component of the building.
15. Examine every individual component of a system, or structure, where such components are typically replicated, including, but not limited to, doors, windows, switches and receptacles. A representative sampling may be performed in order to examine such systems, structures, or components of a building.
16. 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 thereto.

## V. GLOSSARY OR TERMS

*Note: All definitions apply to derivatives of these terms when italicized in the text.*

Accessible:	Can be approached or entered by the inspector safely without difficulty or damage to the system, structure, or component
Appliance:	See component
Appropriate Person:	An individual other than the inspector herein, qualified by virtue of special knowledge, training or resources to further examine a system, structure or component as in the manner of a specialist.
Building:	The primary building subject of the inspection designed and erected for the purpose of human occupancy or use.
Built-in:	See permanently installed.
Component:	A permanently installed appliance, fixture, element or part of a system.
Condition:	The plainly visible and conspicuous state of being of a material object or thing.
Cross-connection:	A connection between two otherwise separate systems, one of which is potable water and the other waste, sewage or other source of contamination.
Destructive:	To demolish, damage, or probe any system, structure or component, or to dismantle any system or component that would not be taken apart by an ordinary person in the course of normal maintenance.
Determine:	To arrive at an opinion or conclusion pursuant to an inspection.
Disconnected:	See shut down
Dismantle:	See destructive
Enter:	See accessible
Evaluate:	To access the systems, structures, or components of a building
Evidence:	Plainly visible and conspicuous material objects or other things presented to the senses that would tend to produce conviction in the mind of an ordinary person as to the existence or non-existence of a fact.
Examine:	To visually look for and identify material physical deficiencies in systems, structures, or components of a building through a non-intrusive physical inspection.

Fixture: See Component

Function: Performing its normal, proper and characteristic action.

Functional Drainage: The emptying of a plumbing fixture in a reasonable amount of time, without of overflow, when another fixture is drained simultaneously.

Functional flow: A reasonable flow of water at the highest and farthest fixture from the building main when another fixture is operated simultaneously.

Further evaluation: A degree of examination beyond that of a typical and customary non-intrusive physical examination.

Inspection: The act of performing an evaluation.

Inspector: One who performs an inspection.

Intrusive: See destructive.

Material physical deficiency: Refer to definition and scope.

Normal user controls: Devices that would be operated by the ordinary occupants of a building, requiring no specialized skill or knowledge.

Operate: To cause systems or equipment to function with normal user controls.

Operational: Systems or components capable of being safely operated.

Oral consultation: A limited visual inspection of specific systems, structures or components of a building where no written report is prepared by the inspector and the inspectors findings, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are orally communicated by the inspector to the client.

Permanently installed: Fixed in place (e.g. screwed, bolted, or nailed) as distinct from Components, systems, or appliances considered portable or freestanding.

Primary parking  
Structure and surfaces: A building and appurtenant surfaces for the purpose of vehicle storage associated with the primary building.

Report: The inspection report is a written document prepared for a fee and issued after an inspection identifying and describing the inspected systems, structures, and components of the building and identifying material physical deficiencies discovered therein.

Representative Sampling:	A small quantity of components of any system or structure enough like others in its class or kind to serve as an example of its class or kind.
Shut down:	Turned off, inactive, not in service, non-operational.
Special equipment:	Any tools or devices other than those normally used by an inspector to perform a typical and customary non-intrusive physical examination of the systems, structures or components of a building, including, but not limited, levels, probes, meters, video or audio devices and measuring devices.
Structure:	An assemblage of various systems and components to function as a whole.
System:	An assemblage of various components to function as a whole.
Technically Exhaustive:	A comprehensive and detailed examination beyond the scope of an inspection which would include, but would not be limited to, specialized knowledge or training, special equipment, measurements, calculations, testing, research, or analysis. Also, where the cost of obtaining information or the time required to conduct a technically exhaustive inspection and prepare the inspection and prepare the inspection report could outweigh the usefulness of the information and could be detrimental to the orderly and timely completion of clients transaction.