



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF HOME INSPECTORS STANDARDS OF PRACTICE



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The *Ontario Association of Home Inspectors* is a non-profit professional society, whose volunteer membership consists of private, fee-paid home inspectors. OAH's objectives include promotion of excellence within the profession and continual improvement of its members' inspection services to the public.

1.2 These Standards of Practice:

- A. Provide inspection guidelines
- B. Make public the services provided by private fee-paid inspectors
- C. Define certain terms relating to these inspections

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1 Inspections performed to these standards shall provide the client with a better understanding of the property conditions, as observed at the time of the inspection.

2.2 Inspectors shall:

- A. Observe readily accessible installed systems and components listed in these Standards.
- B. Submit a written report to the client which will:
 - (1) describe those components specified to be described in sections 4 to 12 of these Standards.
 - (2) state which systems and components designated for inspection in these Standards have been inspected.
 - (3) state any systems and components so inspected which were found to be in need of immediate major repair.

2.3 These Standards are not intended to limit inspectors from:

- A. Reporting observations and conditions in addition to those required in Section 2.2.
- B. Excluding systems and components from the inspection if requested by the client.

3.0 GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

3.1 Limitations:

- A. Inspections done in accordance with these Standards are visual and are not technically exhaustive.
- B. These Standards are applicable to buildings with four or less dwelling units and their garages and carports.

3.2 Exclusions:

- A. Inspectors are NOT required to report on:
1. life expectancy of any component or system.
 2. the causes of the need for major 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 applicable regulatory requirements.
 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 which was not observed.
 9. the presence or absence of pests such as wood damaging organism, rodents or insects.
 10. cosmetic items, underground items, or items not permanently installed.
- B. Inspectors are NOT required to:
1. offer or perform any act or service contrary to law
 2. offer warranties or guarantees of any kind
 3. offer or perform engineering, architectural, plumbing, or any other job function requiring an occupational license in the jurisdiction where the inspection is taking place, unless the inspector holds a valid occupational license, in which case he/she may inform the client that he/she is so licensed, and is therefore qualified to go beyond the OAHJ Standards of Practice, and for an additional fee, perform additional inspections beyond those within the scope of the basic OAHJ inspection.
 4. calculate the strength, adequacy, or efficiency of any system or component.
 5. enter any area or perform any procedure which may damage the property or its components or be dangerous to the inspector or other person.
 6. operate any system or component which is shut down or otherwise inoperable, or operate any system or component which does not respond to normal operating controls.
 7. disturb insulation; move personal items, furniture, equipment, plant life, soil, snow, ice, or debris which obstructs access or visibility.
 8. determine the presence or absence of any suspected hazardous substance including, but not limited to toxins, carcinogens, noise, contaminants in soil, water and air
 9. determine the effectiveness of any system installed to control or remove suspected hazardous substances.
 10. predict future conditions including, but not limited to failure of components.
 11. project operating costs of components.
 12. evaluate acoustical characteristics of any system or component.

4. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

4.1 The inspector shall observe:

1. foundations
2. floors
3. walls
4. columns
5. ceilings
6. roofs

4.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe the type of
 1. floor structure
 2. wall structure
 3. columns
 4. ceiling structure
 5. roof structure
- B. probe structural components where deterioration is suspected. However, probing is NOT required when probing would damage any finished surface.
- C. enter under floor crawl spaces and attic spaces except when access is obstructed, when entry could damage the property, or when dangerous or adverse situations are suspected.
- D. report the methods used to observe under floor crawl spaces and attics.
- E. report signs of water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building components.

5. EXTERIOR

5.1 The inspector shall observe:

1. wall cladding, flashings and trim
2. entryway doors and a representative number of windows
3. garage door operators
4. decks, balconies, stoops, areaways, and porches including railings.
5. eaves, soffits and fascias
6. vegetation, grading, drainage, driveways, patios, walkways and retaining walls with respect to their effect on the condition of the building.

5.2 The inspector shall:

1. describe wall cladding materials
2. operate all entryway doors and a representative number of windows including garage doors, manually or by using permanently installed controls of any garage door opener.
3. report whether or not any garage door operator will automatically reverse or stop when meeting reasonable resistance during closing.

- 5.3 The inspector is NOT required to observe:
1. storm windows and doors, screening, shutters, awnings and similar seasonal accessories.
 2. fences
 3. safety glazing
 4. garage door operator remote control transmitters
 5. geological conditions
 6. soil conditions
 7. recreational facilities
 8. outbuildings other than garages and carports

6. ROOFING

- 6.1 The inspector shall observe:

1. roof coverings
2. roof drainage systems
3. flashings
4. skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations
5. signs of leaks or abnormal condensation on building components

- 6.2 The inspector shall:

1. describe the type of roof covering materials
2. report the methods used to observe the roofing.

- 6.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

1. walk on the roofing
2. observe attached accessories including but not limited to solar systems, antennae, and lightning arrestors.

7. PLUMBING

- 7.1 The inspector shall observe:

1. interior water supply and distribution system including:
 - A. piping materials, including supports, and insulation
 - B. fixtures and faucets
 - C. functional flow
 - D. Leaks
 - E. cross connections
2. interior drain, waste and vent system including:
 - A. traps, drains, waste, and vent piping; piping supports and pipe insulation
 - B. Leaks
 - C. functional drainage
3. hot water systems including:
 - A. water heating equipment
 - B. normal operating controls
 - C. automatic safety controls
 - D. chimneys, flues and vents
4. fuel storage and distribution systems including:
 - A. interior fuel storage equipment, supply piping, venting and supports
 - B. leaks
5. sump pumps

- 7.2 The inspector shall:
- A. Describe:
 - 1. water supply and distribution piping materials
 - 2. drain, waste and vent piping materials
 - 3. water heating equipment
 - B. Operate all plumbing fixtures, including their faucets and all exterior faucets attached to the house.

- 7.3 The inspector is NOT required to:
- A. state the effectiveness of anti-siphon devices
 - B. determine whether supply and waste disposal systems are private or public
 - C. operate automatic safety controls
 - D. operate any valve except water closet flush valves, fixture faucets and hose faucets
 - E. observe:
 - 1. water conditioning systems
 - 2. fire and lawn sprinkler systems
 - 3. on-site water supply quantity and quality
 - 4. on-site disposal systems
 - 5. foundation irrigation systems
 - 6. spas, except as to functional flow and functional drainage

8. ELECTRICAL

- 8.1 The inspector shall observe:
- A. service entrance conductors
 - B. service equipment, grounding equipment, main over current device, main and distribution panels.
 - C. amperage and voltage ratings of the service
 - D. branch circuit conductors, their over current devices, and the compatibility of their amperages and voltages.
 - E. the operation of a representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles located inside the house, garage and on its exterior walls.
 - F. the polarity and grounding of all receptacles within six feet of interior plumbing fixtures, and all receptacles in the garage or carport and on the exterior of inspected structures.
 - G. the operation of Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters
- 8.2 The inspector shall:
- A. describe:
 - 1. service amperage and voltage
 - 2. service entry conductor materials
 - 3. service type as being overhead or underground
 - 4. location of main and distribution panels
 - B. report any observed aluminum branch circuit wiring

- 8.3 The inspector is NOT required to:
- A. insert any tool, probe or testing device inside the panels.
 - B. test or operate any over current device except Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters.
 - C. dismantle any electrical device or control other than to remove the covers of the main and auxiliary distribution panels.
 - D. observe:
 1. low voltage systems
 2. smoke detectors
 3. telephone, security, cable TV, intercoms, or other ancillary wiring that is not a part of the primary electrical distribution system

9. HEATING

- 9.1 The inspector shall observe:
- A. Permanently installed heating systems including:
 1. heating equipment
 2. normal operating controls
 3. automatic safety controls
 4. chimneys, flues, and vents
 5. solid fuel heating devices
 6. heat distribution systems including fans, pumps, ducts and piping, supports, dampers, insulation, air filters, registers, radiators, fan-coil units, convectors.
 7. the presence of an installed heat source for each room.
- 9.2 The inspector shall;
- A. describe:
 1. energy source
 2. heating equipment and distribution type
 - B. operate the system using normal operating controls
 - C. open readily openable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.
- 9.3 The inspector is NOT required to:
- A. operate heating systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage.
 - B. operate automatic safety controls.
 - C. ignite or extinguish solid fuel fires.
 - D. observe:
 1. the interior of flues
 2. fireplace insert flue connections
 3. humidifiers
 4. electronic air filters
 5. the uniformity or adequacy of heat supply to the various rooms.

10 CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING

10.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. central air conditioning including:
 - 1. cooling and air handling equipment
 - 2. normal operating controls
- B. distribution systems including:
 - 1. fans, pumps, ducts and piping, supports, dampers, insulation, air filters, registers, and fan-coil units.
 - 2. the presence of an installed cooling source in each room.

10.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe:
 - 1. energy sources
 - 2. cooling equipment type
- B. operate the systems using normal operating controls
- C. open readily openable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.

10.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. operate cooling systems when either weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage.
- B. observe non-central air conditioners
- C. observe the uniformity or adequacy of cool air supply to the various rooms.

11. INTERIORS

11.1 The inspector shall observe:

- 1. walls, ceilings and floors
- 2. steps, stairways, balconies and railings
- 3. counters and a representative number of cabinets
- 4. a representative number of doors and windows
- 5. separation walls, ceilings and doors between a dwelling unit and an attached garage or another dwelling unit.
- 6. sumps.

11.2 The inspector shall:

- A. operate a representative number of primary windows and interior doors.
- B. report signs of water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building components.

11.3 The inspector is NOT required to observe:

- A. paint, wallpaper and other finish treatments on the interior walls, ceiling and floors.
- B. carpeting
- C. draperies, blinds or other window treatments.
- D. household appliances
- E. recreational facilities or another dwelling unit.

12. INSULATION AND VENTILATION
- 12.1 The inspector shall observe:
 - A. insulation and vapour retarders in unfinished spaces
 - B. ventilation of attics and foundation areas
 - C. kitchen, bathroom and laundry venting systems
- 12.2 The inspector shall describe:
 - A. insulation and vapour retarders in unfinished spaces
 - B. absence of same in unfinished space at conditioned surfaces
- 12.3 The inspector is NOT required to report on:
 - A. concealed insulation and vapour retarders
 - B. venting equipment which is integral with household appliances.

OAH I CODE OF CONDUCT
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

Members shall:

1. Carry on the practice of Home Inspection in accordance with law, integrity and honesty.
2. Maintain client confidentiality
3. Not act for or accept payment from more than one party concurrently in connection with the subject property unless fully disclosed to and approved by all parties.
4. Remain independent and at arm's length from any other business or personal interest which might affect the quality of the service provided. In particular:
 - A. a member shall not repair for a fee any condition found during an inspection, nor use the inspection as a vehicle to deliberately obtain work in another field.
 - B. a member who sells real estate may not inspect properties located within the jurisdiction of the real estate board or boards where he/she, or the company with which he is associated, are active
 - C. a member who provides public sector inspection services may not inspect a property within the jurisdiction where they have public sector authority that would affect the subject property.
5. Promptly disclose to the client any relationship to the property or interested party, business or personal interest which might be construed as affecting the member's independence.
6. Not solicit, receive or give referral fees.
7. Refer trades or other specialists only when doing so is in the best interest of the client, and does not detract from the member's independence.
8. Only provide an opinion on conditions and matters within the scope of the member's expertise, education, experience and profession.
9. Act in good faith to all. Uphold the integrity and reputation of this profession. Respond promptly to complaints.