

# THE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR SOUTH CAROLINA HOME INSPECTIONS

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# STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR SOUTH CAROLINA HOME INSPECTIONS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The state of South Carolina has adopted the following standards of practice for South Carolina home inspections. The following Standards provide guidelines for the Residential Home Inspector and outline what the Residential Home Inspector should and should not observe, identify, inspect and describe in the Inspection Report. The guidelines provide the minimum contents of a written report and are not intended to limit the Residential Home Inspector. If the Inspector wishes to provide additional inspection services not covered in the Standards, that is up to each inspector. Limitations or exclusions (systems or components not inspected, identified or reported) can be found after each section.

**WARRANTIES AND GUARENTEES:** The 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 improvements, mechanical system or appliance. The residential Inspector should take no position on value nor make any representation as to advisability of purchase or suitability to use. The Inspector should not incite or stir up quarrels or groundless lawsuits.

**LICENSING REQUIREMENTS:** License Requirements for Persons Engaging in the Business of Inspection Practice: A South Carolina state license is required for anyone offering or practicing home inspection unless that individual is a currently a South Carolina licensed engineer, architect, general contractor or residential builder. This requirement is based on Chapter 106, Statutory Authority: 1976 Code § 40-59-210 – 40-59-240(B).

**GLOSSARY:** A glossary of terms and definitions is located in the back of the Standards of Practice.

## 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 2.1. The purpose of this document is to establish a minimum standard (Standard) for *home inspections* performed by *home inspectors* who subscribe to this Standard. *Home inspections* performed using this Standard are intended to provide the client with information about the condition of inspected *systems* and *components* at the time of the *home inspection*.
- 2.2. **The inspector shall:**
  - A. *inspect readily accessible*, visually observable, *installed systems* and *components* listed in this Standard.
  - B. provide the client with a written report, using a format and medium selected by the *inspector*, that states:
    1. those *systems* and *components* inspected that, in the professional judgment of the *inspector*, are not functioning properly, significantly deficient, *unsafe*, or are near the end of their service lives,
    2. recommendations to correct, or monitor for future correction, the deficiencies reported in 2.2.B.1, or items needing *further evaluation* (Per Exclusion 13.2.A.5 the *inspector* is 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.B.1, that are not self-evident,
    4. those *systems* and *components* designated for inspection in this Standard that were present at the time of the *home inspection* but were not inspected and the reason(s) they were not inspected.
  - C. adhere to the South Carolina adopted Code of Ethics for the Home Inspection Profession.
- 2.3. This Standard is not intended to limit the *inspector* from:
  - A. including other services or *systems* and *components* in addition to those required in Section 2.2.A.
  - B. designing or specifying repairs, provided the *inspector* is appropriately qualified and willing to do so.
  - C. excluding *systems* and *components* from the *inspection* if requested or agreed to by the client.

## 3. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

- 3.1. **The inspector shall:**
  - A. *inspect structural components* including the foundation and framing.
  - B. *describe:*
    1. the methods used to inspect *under-floor crawlspaces* and attics.
    2. the foundation.
    3. the floor structure.
    4. the wall structure.
    5. the ceiling structure.
    6. the roof structure.
- 3.2. **The inspector is NOT required to:**
  - A. provide *engineering* or architectural services or analysis.
  - B. offer an opinion about the adequacy of *structural systems* and *components*
  - C. enter *under-floor crawlspace* areas that have less than 24 inches of vertical clearance between *components* and the ground or that have an access opening smaller than 16 inches by 24 inches.
  - D. traverse attic load-bearing *components* that are concealed by insulation or by other materials.

## 4. EXTERIOR

### 4.1. The *inspector* shall:

- A. *inspect*:
  1. *wall coverings*, flashing, and trim.
  2. exterior doors.
  3. attached and adjacent decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings.
  4. eaves, soffits, and fascias where accessible from the ground level.
  5. vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls that are likely to adversely affect the building.
  6. adjacent and entryway walkways, patios, and driveways.
- B. *describe wall coverings*.

### 4.2. The *inspector* is NOT required to *inspect*:

- A. screening, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.
- B. fences, boundary walls, and similar structures.
- C. geological and 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. antennas.
- B. interiors of vent *systems*, flues, and 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 fixtures and faucets.
  2. interior drain, waste, and vent *systems* including fixtures.
  3. water heating equipment and hot water supply *systems*.
  4. vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys.
  5. fuel storage and fuel distribution *systems*.
  6. sewage ejectors, sump pumps, and related piping.
- B. *describe*:
  1. interior 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 vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys that are not *readily accessible*.
  3. wells, well pumps, and water storage related equipment.
  4. water conditioning *systems*.
  5. solar, geothermal, and other renewable energy water heating *systems*.
  6. manual and automatic fire extinguishing and sprinkler *systems* and landscape irrigation *systems*.
  7. septic and other sewage disposal *systems*.
- B. *determine*:
  1. whether water supply and sewage disposal are public or private.
  2. water quality.

3. the adequacy of combustion air *components*.
- C. measure water supply flow and pressure, and well water quantity.
- D. fill shower pans and fixtures to test for leaks.

## 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 subpanels.
  6. conductors.
  7. overcurrent protection devices.
  8. a *representative number* of *installed* lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles.
  9. ground fault circuit interrupters and arc fault circuit interrupters.
- B. *describe*:
  1. amperage rating of the service.
  2. location of main disconnect(s) and subpanels.
  3. presence or absence of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
  4. the predominant branch circuit wiring method.

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

- A. *inspect*:
  1. remote control devices.
  2. or test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, security *systems*, and other signaling and warning devices.
  3. low voltage wiring *systems* and *components*.
  4. ancillary wiring *systems* and *components* not a part of the primary electrical power distribution system.
  5. solar, geothermal, wind, and other renewable energy *systems*.
- B. measure amperage, voltage, and impedance.
- C. determine the age and type of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.

## 8. HEATING

### 8.1. The *inspector* shall:

- A. *open readily openable access panels*.
- B. *inspect*:
  1. *installed* heating equipment.
  2. vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys.
  3. distribution systems.
- C. *describe*:
  1. energy source(s).
  2. heating *systems*.

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

- A. *inspect*:
  1. interiors of vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys that are not *readily accessible*.
  2. heat exchangers.
  3. humidifiers and dehumidifiers.
  4. electric air cleaning and sanitizing devices.
  5. heating *systems* using ground-source, water-source, solar, and renewable energy technologies.
  6. heat-recovery and similar whole-house mechanical ventilation *systems*.
- B. *determine*:
  1. heat supply adequacy and distribution balance.
  2. the adequacy of combustion air *components*.

## 9. AIR CONDITIONING

### 9.1. The *inspector* shall:

- A. *open readily openable access panels*.
- B. *inspect*:
  1. central and permanently *installed* cooling equipment.
  2. distribution *systems*.
- C. *describe*:

1. energy source(s).
2. cooling *systems*.

9.2. **The inspector is NOT required to:**

- A. *inspect* electric air cleaning and sanitizing devices.
- B. determine cooling supply adequacy and distribution balance.
- C. *inspect* cooling units that are not permanently *installed* or that are *installed* in windows.
- D. *inspect* cooling *systems* using ground-source, water-source, solar, and renewable energy technologies.

## 10. INTERIORS

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 vehicle doors and garage vehicle door operators.
- F. *installed* ovens, ranges, surface cooking appliances, microwave ovens, dishwashing machines, and food waste grinders by using *normal operating controls* to activate the primary function.

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

- A. paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments.
- B. floor coverings.
- C. window treatments.
- D. coatings on and the hermetic seals between panes of window glass.
- E. central vacuum *systems*.
- F. *recreational facilities*.
- G. *installed* and free-standing kitchen and laundry appliances not listed in Section 10.1.F.
- H. appliance thermostats including their calibration, adequacy of heating elements, self cleaning oven cycles, indicator lights, door seals, timers, clocks, timed features, and other specialized features of the appliance.
- I. operate, or confirm the operation of every control and feature of an inspected appliance.

## 11. INSULATION AND VENTILATION

11.1. **The inspector shall:**

- A. *inspect*:
  1. insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
  2. ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
  3. kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and similar exhaust *systems*.
  4. clothes dryer exhaust *systems*.
- B. *describe*:
  1. insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
  2. absence of insulation in unfinished spaces at conditioned surfaces.

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

## 12. FIREPLACES AND FUEL-BURNING APPLIANCES

12.1. **The inspector shall:**

- A. *inspect*:
  1. fuel-burning fireplaces, stoves, and fireplace inserts.
  2. fuel-burning accessories *installed* in fireplaces.
  3. chimneys and vent *systems*.
- B. *describe systems* and *components* listed in 12.1.A.1 and .2.

12.2. **The inspector is NOT required to:**

- A. *inspect*:
  1. interiors of vent *systems*, flues, and chimneys that are not *readily accessible*.
  2. fire screens and doors.
  3. seals and gaskets.
  4. automatic fuel feed devices.
  5. mantles and fireplace surrounds.
  6. combustion air *components* and to determine their adequacy.
  7. heat distribution assists (gravity fed and fan assisted).
  8. fuel-burning fireplaces and appliances located outside the *inspected* structures.
- B. determine draft characteristics.
- C. move fireplace inserts and stoves or firebox contents.

## 13. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

### 13.1. General limitations

- A. The *inspector* is NOT required to perform actions, or to make determinations, or to make recommendations not specifically stated in this Standard.
- B. *Inspections* performed using this Standard:
  - 1. are not *technically exhaustive*.
  - 2. are not required to identify and to report:
    - A. concealed conditions, latent defects, consequential damages, and
    - B. cosmetic imperfections that do not significantly affect a *component's* performance of its intended function.
    - C. This Standard applies to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their attached and detached garages and carports.
    - D. This Standard shall not limit or prevent the inspector from meeting state statutes which license professional home inspection and home inspectors.
    - E. Redundancy in the description of the requirements, limitations, and exclusions regarding the scope of the *home inspection* is provided for emphasis only.

### 13.2. General exclusions

- A. **The *inspector* is NOT required to determine:**
  - 1. the condition of *systems* and *components* that are not *readily accessible*.
  - 2. the remaining life expectancy of *systems* and *components*.
  - 3. the strength, adequacy, effectiveness, and efficiency of *systems* and *components*.
  - 4. the causes of conditions and deficiencies.
  - 5. methods, materials, and costs of corrections.
  - 6. future conditions including but not limited to failure of systems and components.
  - 7. the suitability of the property for specialized uses.
  - 8. compliance of *systems* and *components* with past and present requirements and guidelines (codes, regulations, laws, ordinances, specifications, installation and maintenance instructions, use and care guides, etc.).
  - 9. the market value of the property and its marketability.
  - 10. the advisability of purchasing the property.
  - 11. the presence of plants, animals, and other life forms and substances that may be hazardous or harmful to humans including, but not limited to, wood destroying organisms, molds and mold-like substances.
  - 12. the presence of environmental hazards including, but not limited to, allergens, toxins, carcinogens, electromagnetic radiation, noise, radioactive substances, and contaminants in building materials, soil, water, and air.
  - 13. the effectiveness of *systems installed* and methods used to control or remove suspected hazardous plants, animals, and environmental hazards.
  - 14. operating costs of *systems* and *components*.
  - 15. acoustical properties of *systems* and *components*.
  - 16. soil conditions relating to geotechnical or hydrologic specialties.
  - 17. whether items, materials, conditions and *components* are subject to recall, controversy, litigation, product liability, and other adverse claims and conditions.
- B. **The *inspector* is NOT required to offer:**
  - 1. or to perform acts or services contrary to law or to government regulations.
  - 2. or to perform architectural, *engineering*, contracting, or surveying services or to confirm or to evaluate such services performed by others.
  - 3. or to perform trades or professional services other than *home inspection*.
  - 4. warranties or guarantees.
- C. **The *inspector* is NOT required to operate:**
  - 1. *systems* and *components* that are shut down or otherwise inoperable.
  - 2. *systems* and *components* that do not respond to *normal operating controls*.
  - 3. shut-off valves and manual stop valves.
  - 4. *automatic safety controls*.
- D. **The *inspector* is NOT required to enter:**
  - 1. areas that will, in the professional judgment of the *inspector*, likely be dangerous to the *inspector* or to other persons, or to damage the property or its *systems* and *components*.
  - 2. *under-floor crawlspaces* and attics that are not *readily accessible*.
- E. **The *inspector* is NOT required to inspect:**
  - 1. underground items including, but not limited to, underground storage tanks and 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 and common areas in multi-unit housing, such as condominium properties and cooperative housing.
  7. every occurrence of multiple similar *components*.
  8. outdoor cooking appliances.
- F. **The *inspector* is NOT required to:**
1. perform procedures or operations that will, in the professional judgment of the *inspector*, likely be dangerous to the *inspector* or to other persons, or to damage the property or its *systems* or *components*.
  2. *describe* or report on *systems* and *components* that are not included in this Standard and that were not *inspected*.
  3. move personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice, and debris.
  4. *dismantle systems* and *components*, except as explicitly required by this Standard.
  5. reset, reprogram, or otherwise adjust devices, *systems*, and *components* affected by *inspection* required by this Standard.
  6. ignite or extinguish fires, pilot lights, burners, and other open flames that require manual ignition.
  7. probe surfaces that would be damaged or where no deterioration is visible or presumed to exist.

## GLOSSARY OF ITALICIZED TERMS

**Automatic Safety Controls** Devices designed and *installed* to protect *systems* and *components* from unsafe conditions

**Component** A part of a *system*

**Decorative** Ornamental; not required for the proper operation of the essential *systems* and *components* of a home

**Describe** To identify (in writing) a *system* and *component* by its type or other distinguishing characteristics

**Dismantle** To take apart or remove *components*, devices, or pieces of equipment that would not be taken apart or removed by a homeowner in the course of normal maintenance

**Engineering** The application of scientific knowledge for the design, control, or use of building structures, equipment, or apparatus

**Further Evaluation** Examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman, or service technician beyond that provided by a *home inspection*

**Home Inspection** The process by which an *inspector* visually examines the *readily accessible systems* and *components* of a home and *describes* those *systems* and *components* using this Standard

**Inspect** The process of examining *readily accessible systems* and *components* by (1) applying this Standard, and (2) operating *normal operating controls*, and (3) opening *readily openable access panels*

**Inspector** A person hired to examine *systems* and *components* of a building using this Standard

**Installed** Attached such that removal requires tools

**Normal Operating Controls** Devices such as thermostats, switches, and valves intended to be operated by the homeowner

**Readily Accessible** Available for visual inspection without requiring moving of personal property, dismantling, destructive measures, or actions that will likely involve risk to persons or property

**Readily Openable Access Panel** A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that is *readily accessible*, within normal reach, can be opened by one person, and is not sealed in place

**Recreational Facilities** Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, exercise, entertainment, athletic, playground and other similar equipment, and associated accessories

**Representative Number** One *component* per room for multiple similar interior *components* such as windows and electric receptacles; one *component* on each side of the building for multiple similar exterior *components*

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

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

**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 by the *inspector* to be a significant risk of serious 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 practices

**Wall Covering** A protective or insulating layer fixed to the outside of a building such as: aluminum, brick, EIFS, stone, stucco, vinyl, and wood

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