

# SOUTH CAROLINA RESIDENTIAL BUILDERS COMMISSION

## HOME INSPECTOR STANDARDS OF PRACTICE



Adopted by the Residential Builders Commission May 13, 1998,

## South Carolina Home Inspector

### Standards of Practice

The following Standards provide guidelines for the Residential Home Inspector.

The guidelines outline what the Residential Home Inspector should observe, identify, inspect and describe.

The guidelines provide the minimum contents of a written report. These guidelines 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.

**Introduction:** The purpose of the Residential Standards of Practice (Standards) is to establish a uniform guide for performing an inspection of buildings and equipment.

**Terms:** A glossary of terms and definitions is located in back of the Residential Standards.

**Procedures:** The procedures are the Residential Standards that identify what is to be inspected and reported.

The Inspector will not disclose any information concerning the results of the inspection without the approval of the clients or their representatives.

The Inspector will not accept compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one interested party for the same service without the consent of all interested parties.

The Inspector will not accept, or offer commissions or allowances, directly or indirectly, from other parties in connection with work for which the Inspector is responsible.

The Inspector will promptly disclose to the client any interest in a business which may affect the client. The Inspector will not allow an interest in any business to affect the quality or results of the inspection work, which the inspector may be called upon to perform. The Inspector may not perform any work or improvement to a residence upon which the Inspector performed a home inspection within the previous 12 months.

**Purpose:** The purpose of a residential inspection is to disclose the general conditions of the building, improvements, mechanical systems and appliances as they exist on the day of the inspection.

**Scope:** The scope of the residential inspection is a visual observation, with limited use of mechanical instruments, of readily accessible areas of the building, improvements, mechanical systems and appliances. The inspection is limited to areas and systems identified as follows: grounds and appurtenances; roofing / guttering / other roof components; home exteriors; garage / carport; electrical; basement / crawl space / slab; plumbing; heating; cooling; attic; and general interiors and kitchen / appliances.

**Limitations:** The Residential Inspector Standards are designed to identify and disclose observed general conditions. The residential inspection is limited to readily accessible areas. No disassembly of equipment or activating of equipment that has been "shut - down" should be performed. No opening of walls, moving of furniture, appliances, stored items, walking on roofs or excavation is to be performed.

Concealed, camouflaged or inaccessible conditions may not be exposed.

Systems and conditions that are not within the scope of the inspection include, but are not limited to: environmental hazards (e.g. lead paint, formaldehyde, toxic or flammable materials, asbestos, radon); pest infestation; portable appliances (e.g. washer, dryers, window air conditioners); security systems; telephone or television systems, fire or lawn sprinklers; swimming pools; spas or jetted tubs; tennis courts; playground or other recreational or leisure appliances or equipment; below ground septic or drainage systems; water wells; zoning ordinances; or any items considered cosmetic in nature. Any general comments about these systems and conditions are informational only and do not represent an inspection.

Warranties and Guarantees:

The residential 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 state license is required for anyone offering or practicing home inspection unless that individual is a currently 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).

## A) ROOFING, GUTTERING AND OTHER ROOF COMPONENTS

### 1) ROOF STYLE:

A) Identify and report the styles of roofs. (Examples: hip, gable, shed, mansard, etc.)

### 2) ROOF COVERINGS (materials):

A) Identify the type materials (composition shingles, slate, cement asbestos, etc.).

B) Inspect the covering and report the observed condition, describing visible condition and evidence of leaks.

### 3) VISIBLE FLASHING:

A) Inspect and report the observed condition of visible flashing. **If flashings are not visible, report not visible, not inspected.**

### 4) SKYLIGHTS:

A) Report if present or not.

B) Inspect and report if there is evidence of leaking.

### 5) ROOF PENETRATIONS (plumbing stacks~ gas vents~ etc.):

A) Inspect and report the observed condition of all roof protrusions and their flashing.

B) Describe and report defects or deficiencies.

### 6) FIREPLACE CHIMNEYS: A)

Report if present or not.

B) Inspect and report the observed condition of the chimney and its component elements.

C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

### 7) GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS:

A) Report if present or not.

B) Inspect and report the observed conditions of gutters and downspout systems. C) Describe and report defects or deficiencies.

### LIMITATIONS:

A) The Inspector is not required to:

1) Perform tasks that place his or her person in danger.

2) Inspect or report on accessory items not listed above (antennas, solar panels, etc.).

3) Estimate the remaining life of roof coverings, flashing, caulking materials or other components.

4) Handle or disturb materials suspected of containing hazardous materials.

B) Describe and report how the roof was inspected (from ground, with binoculars, from a ladder).

C) Describe and report areas that could not be inspected (tops of flat roof, valleys of compound roof designs, etc.).

**B) HOME EXTERIOR**

- 1) TRIM:
  - A) Inspect and report the observed condition of the materials. B) Describe and report defects.
- 2) SIDING / WALL COVERINGS: A)  
Identify the materials by type.
  - B) Inspect and report the observed condition of the materials and components.
- 3) PAINT:
  - A) Inspect and report the observed condition. B) Observe the condition of paint and caulking.
- 4) WINDOWS:
  - A) Inspect and report the observed condition of a representative number. ~) Identify and report the type (wood, metal, etc.).
  - C) Describe and report defects or deficiencies.
- 5) DOORS:
  - A) Inspect and report the observed condition of all accessible exterior doors. B) Describe and report visible defects.
- 6) STORM WINDOWS AND DOORS: A)  
Report if present or not.
  - B) Describe and report visible defects.
- 7) SCREENS:
  - A) Report if present or not.
  - B) Report the observed condition.
- 8) PORCHES:
  - A) Report if present or not.
  - B) Inspect and report defects or deficiencies.
- 9) DECKS, PATIOS, AND BALCONIES (attached to the dwelling):
  - A) Report if present or not.
  - B) Inspect and report the observed condition of the structures and components. C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.
- 10) ALTERATIONS:
  - A) If detenninable, report if alterations or additions have been made to original house.

## C) GARAGE / CARPORT

### I) TYPE:

A) Report if present or not.

B) Describe style, size and location. (Example: two-car attached garage or carport, single car attached, two-car drive under, etc.)

### 2) DOORS AND OPENERS:

A) Report if present or not.

B) Operate doors and/or openers and report if functional.

### LIMITATIONS:

A) The Inspector is not required to:

1) Operate door openers that have been disconnected from power source.

2) Operate doors if animals are loose in a garage.

## D) ELECTRICAL

### 1) OVER CURRENT PROTECTION:

A) Identify and report the type.

B) Inspect and report the visible condition.

C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

### 2) TYPE CONDUCTORS, MAIN AND BRANCH CIRCUITS:

A) Identify the type conductors present on the service cable and all visible circuit conductors (aluminum or copper).

B) Describe and report visible defects and/or deficiencies.

C) Report the location of the main service panel and sub.service panels.

### 3) INCOMING SERVICE:

A) Identify and report the location (overhead or underground). B) Describe and report the condition.

### 4) GROUNDING CABLE:

A) Identify and report the presence, location and observed condition of grounding conductors.

### 5) FIXTURES AND OUTLETS;

A) Test a representative number of accessible light switches, wall receptacles and light fixtures.

B) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

C) Identify and report the presence of aluminum wiring in Branch circuit conductors.

6) GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTER (GFCI): A) Report if present or not.

B) Identify the locations of GFCI breakers.

C) Test and report if breakers that protect wall outlets are operational or inoperable.  
.Describe how tested.

- 7) SMOKE DETECTORS:  
A) Report if present or not.

LIMITATIONS:

- A) Inspector is not required to:
- 1) Insert any tool, probe or testing device into the main or sub-panels.
  - 2) Activate electrical system or branch circuits that are not energized.
  - 3) Operate overload protection devices except GFCI breakers.
  - 4) Test GFCI breakers that are not connected to a wall outlet.
  - 5) Move objects to gain access to electrical outlets or panels.
  - 6) Inspect equipment that is not readily accessible, nor dismantle equipment or component.
  - 7) Test all switches, receptacles, or fixtures, not to remove switch or receptacle.
  - 8) Operate a smoke detector by any means other than supplied by the manufacturer.

E) BASEMENT, CRA WL SPACE, SLAB

- 1) BASEMENT:  
A) Report if present or not.
- 2) CRA WL SPACE:  
A) Report if present or not.  
B) Report if not entered and/or how inspected.  
C) Inspect and report entry access location, and adequacy of under-floor ventilation.  
D) Describe and report any visible damage.
- 3) SLAB:  
A) Report if present or not.  
B) Inspect and report visible conditions.  
C) Describe and report visible defects and/or deficiencies.
- 4) VISIBLE FRAMING:  
A) Report if not visible.  
B) Inspect and report the observed condition of the visible materials and structural components.  
C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.
- 5) VISIBLE FOUNDATION WALLS:  
A) Report the type materials.  
B) Inspect and report observed condition of the visible materials.  
C) Report if walls are not visible.

D) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

6) FLOORS:

A) Report the type materials (concrete, dirt or wood).

B) Inspect and report the observed condition.

C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

7) EVIDENCE OF WATER SEEPAGE:

A) Describe and report evidence of water seepage or penetration into or through a foundation, basement or crawl space.

B) Report any damage from water noted.

8) SUMP AND PUMP:

A) Report if present.

LIMITATIONS:

A) The Inspector is not required to:

1) Enter crawl space with headroom less than 18 inches or where adverse conditions exist.

2) Move stored items or debris.

3) Enter areas that may contain hazardous materials.

4) Determine the extent of damage caused by insects or water.

5) Operate sump pumps.

## F) PLUMBING

1) VISIBLE WATER PIPING:

A) Identify and report the type.

B) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

2) VISIBLE WASTE PIPING:

A) Identify and report the type.

B) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

3) WATER SUPPLY:

A) Identify and report the source.

B) If source is unknown, report as unknown.

C) Verify presence of back flow prevention device.

4) WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEM:

- A) Identify and report the source.
- B) If source is unknown, report as unknown.
- C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

5) MAIN WATER SHUT-OFF:

- A) Report the location.**

6) WATER HEATER:

- A) Identify and report the observed condition.
- B) Determine if pressure relief valve is present.

7) FAUCETS:

- A) Report functional flow.

8) DRAINS:

- A) Report functional drainage.

9) WATER PRESSURE: A)

- Report adequacy.**

10) SHOWERS AND ALL FIXTURES:

- A) Operate all fixtures.
- B) Inspect and report the observed condition.
- C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.

11) WASHER AND DRYER CONNECTIONS: A)

- Inspect and report location;

12) OTHER EQUIPMENT:

- A) Inspect and report the observed condition of waste ejection systems when possible.
- B) Inspect and report the presence and condition of laundry tubs and wet bars.
- C) Describe or identify other equipment and report if tested or not tested.

LIMITATIONS:

- A) The Inspector is not required to:

- 1) Operate systems that have been "shut down" or winterized.
- 2) Operate pressure relief valves where the Inspector feels operation may result in leaking.

## G) HEATING

- 1) TYPE ENERGY SOURCE:
    - A) Report type of fuel.
  
  - 2) EQUIPMENT:
    - A) Report the type equipment.
    - B) Operate and report the observed condition of thermostat.
  
  - 3) BTU/HR. RATING:
    - A) Report the Btu/hr rating, if available.
  
  - 4) LOCATION AND CONDITION:
    - A) Report the location of all heating equipment.
    - B) Operate, inspect and report the observed condition.
    - C) Describe and report defects and/or deficiencies.
  
  - 5) DISTRIBUTION:
    - A) Inspect and report the observed condition of the visible supply and return air ducts return openings.
  
  - 6) VENTS:
    - A) Inspect and report the observed condition of a representative number of supply and return openings.
  
  - 7) FILTERS:
    - A) Identify if present.
  
  - 8) OTHER:
    - A) Inspect and report the presence and observed condition of fixed units used for supplementary heat.
- LIMITATIONS:
- A) The Inspector is not required to:
    - 1) Operate equipment when the exterior temperature is 85 degrees Fahrenheit or above.
    - 2) Activate equipment that has been "shut down" or will not respond to thermostat controls.
    - 3) Disassemble equipment by any means other than panels provided by the manufacturer for inspections and/or service.
    - 4) Report on the efficiency of the system or distribution.

## H) COOLING

- 1) TYPE ENERGY SOURCE:
  - A) Report the energy source.
- 2) EQUIPMENT BRAND:
  - 1) Report the type equipment by brand.
- 3) BTU/hr. RATING:
  - A) Report the Btu/hr rating, if available.
- 4) CONDITION AND OPERATION:
  - A) Operate the equipment (weather permitting) by normal control services and report the observed condition.

### LIMITATIONS:

- A) The Inspector is not required to:
  - 1) Activate systems that have been "shut down" or otherwise deactivated.
  - 2) Operate cooling equipment when the ambient temperature has been less than 65 degrees Fahrenheit within the previous 24 hours.
  - 3) Report on the efficiency of the equipment.

## I) ATTIC

- 1) ACCESS:
  - A) Report if not entered and why.
- 2) INSULATION TYPE AND APPROXIMATE DEPTH:
  - A) Identify and report the type and approximate density of thickness of the insulation.
- 3) VENTILATOR FAN:
  - A) Identify if present and report observed condition.
- 4) WHOLE HOUSE FAN:
  - A) Identify if present and report observed condition.
- 5) FRAMING:
  - A) Identify and report defects and/or deficiencies.
- 6) LEAKS:
  - A) Identify and report evidence of leaking, both previous and existing.

LIMITATIONS:

A) The Inspector is not required to:

- 1) Enter attic spaces where the headroom is less than 3 feet.
- 2) Enter attic spaces where hazardous conditions exist.
- 3) Evaluate ventilation adequacy by any means other than visually.
- 4) Evaluate the efficiency of insulation other than by accepted thickness.

**J) GENERAL INTERIOR**

1) WALLS:

A) Report the observed conditions.

2) CEILINGS:

A) Report the observed conditions.

3) FLOORS AND FLOOR COVERINGS:

A) Report the observed conditions.

4) STAIRS:

A) Identify, if present.

B) Report the observed conditions.

5) DOORS:

A) Operate all accessible doors.

B) Report the observed conditions.

6) WINDOWS:

A) Operate a representative number of windows and at least one window in each designated sleeping area.

B) Report the observed conditions.

7) FIREPLACES:

A) Identify, if present, and report the observed condition.

LIMITATION:

A) The Inspector is not required to:

- 1) Move furniture or owner's possessions.
- 2) Light a fire in the fireplace.

**K) KITCHENS AND APPLIANCES**

A) Identify fuel source.

B) Observe and report all built-in appliances.

1) CABINETS:

A) Report the observed condition.

2) STOVE OR RANGE:

A) Identify fuel source.

B) Operate and report defects and/or deficiencies.

3) OVEN:

A) Identify fuel source.

B) Operate and report defects and/or deficiencies.

4) TRASH

DISPOSAL:

A) Identify if present.

B) Operate and report defects and/or deficiencies.

5) FANNED HOOD:

A) Identify if present.

B) Operate and report defects and/or deficiencies.

6) DISHWASHER:

A) Identify if present.

B) Operate and report defects and/or deficiencies.

**LIMITATIONS:**

A) The Inspector is not required to:

1) Calibrate temperatures or determine if the oven-heated temperature corresponds to the control setting.

2) Determine the efficiency of any equipment.

3) Determine the remaining life of any equipment.

**L) GENERAL CONDITIONS OF RESIDENCE**

A) Report general condition of the residence and the maintenance.

## M) ADVERTISEMENTS

- 1) For the purpose of this section, advertisements include, but are not limited to, inspection reports, business cards, invoices, signs, purchased telephone directory displays and advertising by newspapers, radio and television.
  - A) Advertisements by a person licensed as an Inspector should contain the Inspector's name, the business name, address and license number of the Inspector.
  - B) The Commission may reprimand, suspend or revoke the license of a person who is found to have engaged in false or misleading advertising or to have failed to comply with provisions of this section.
  - C) Any Inspector who moves is required to keep the Commission informed of any change of address.

## N) DEPARTURE PROVISION

- 1) An Inspector should exclude from the inspection any part, component or system which the inspector is not competent or qualified to inspect.
- 2) Any exclusion should be disclosed in the report.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purpose of the Residential Standards, certain abbreviations, terms, phrases, words and their derivatives shall be construed as defined in this Glossary of Terms. Words used in the present tense include the future.

Words, terms or phrases not defined below will have the meanings stated in the Standard Building Code, Standard Mechanical Code, CABO One and Two Family Dwelling, Standard Plumbing Code, Standard Gas Code, and National Electrical Code. Words not defined below or in one of the Codes will have the meanings in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, as revised.

**ACTIVATE:** To turn on equipment by normal control means such as a thermostat or control switch.

**ACCEPTABLE:** Functioning as designed, installed or intended.

**ACCESSIBLE:** Admitting close approach, but which first may require the removal of a panel, door or similar covering of the item described, without damaging the building structure or finish. See READILY ACCESSIBLE.

**ACCESSORY BUILDING:** A secondary building, the use of which is incidental to that of the main building.

**ADEQUATE OR ADEQUACY:** Equal to a requirement, sufficient.

**AMBIENT TEMPERATURE:** The temperature around equipment.

**ATTIC:** Accessible space between top of uppermost ceiling and the underside of roof. Inaccessible spaces are considered structural cavities.

**BASEMENT:** A space of full story height below the first floor wholly or partly below exterior grade.

**CELLAR:** That portion of a building, the ceiling of which is entirely below grade or less than 4 feet, 6 inches above grade.

**CHASE:** A groove or shaft in a wall provided for accommodation of pipes, ducts, or conduits.

**CIRCUIT:** The path of electricity away from, and back to, its source.

**CODE:** Refers to the local building codes.

**CONCEALED:** Rendered inaccessible.