

Global Association of Prime Home Inspectors

Commercial Standards of Practice

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I. Purpose and Scope

- A. The goal of the Global Association of Prime Home Inspectors (GAPHI) is to provide the very backbone that will be the foundation for superior commercial inspections throughout the domestic world. These GAPHI Standards of Practice (Standards) serve the dual purpose of providing a high standard of quality for potential investors and guidance and protection for owners.
- B. These Standards define what actions inspectors are required and not required to perform when performing a commercial inspection.
- C. GAPHI recommends that its members perform each commercial inspection according to these Standards. However, the inspector and client(s) may expressly agree orally or in writing to expand or limit the scope of an inspection. Doing so does not waive, cancel, or modify these Standards.
- D. GAPHI seeks to continually improve the inspection services provided by its members. Therefore, these Standards will continue to evolve over time.
- E. The inspector must have the client(s) sign a written contract that specifies the services to be performed, service limitations, and compensation required before delivering a report.
- F. The scope of each inspection is accessible components outlined in these Standards. A component is considered accessible if it may, in the opinion of the inspector, be reached without risking the health of the inspector, without moving anything, and without risking damage to property.
- G. Only non-intrusive visual observations and operation of devices using normal operating controls of devices will be performed. Inspections are not intended to be technically exhaustive.
- H. Aesthetic matters are excluded, as they are a matter of taste and their significance is difficult to objectively determine.
- I. The inspector is relieved from the obligation to evaluate any component that is deemed by the inspector to have been constructed or installed without a permit when it would generally require one.
- J. Components may be excluded from an inspection if insufficient time is provided to the inspector to properly evaluate the component.

- K. The inspector is not required to perform any action required by these Standards if the action would violate a local law, statute, or ordinance.
- L. The inspector is not required to connect or operate any component that is shut down or disconnected.
- M. Any component that is required by these Standards to be evaluated, but is excluded, must be noted in the inspection report, along with the reason for exclusion.
- N. No inspector action shall be construed as providing an expressed or implied warranty, guarantee, or insurance for any component.
- O. The inspector is not required to include the following items in an inspection report:
 - 1. Components not specifically identified in these Standards
 - 2. Any components not readily accessible.
 - 3. Procedures for and estimated costs associated with repairing any component.
 - 4. Market value or marketability of the property or any part thereof.
 - 5. Advice as to whether or not to purchase the property.
 - 6. Building code or zoning ordinance violations.
 - 7. City, county, or state code violations.
 - 8. Evaluation of personal property.
 - 9. Estimated age of construction of any component.
 - 10. Estimated life expectancy of any component.
- P. The inspector is not required to perform:
 - 1. Repairs.
 - 2. Geological testing (soil conditions, geological stability, etc.)
 - 3. A termite and/or other wood-destroying organism inspection.
 - 4. A mold inspection that can only be performed by laboratory testing.
 - 5. An asbestos inspection that can only be performed by laboratory testing.
 - 6. Water testing for roof, wall, and window leaks.
 - 7. Permits or public records research.
 - 8. Intrusive or destructive testing or examination.
 - 9. Voltage drop calculations.
 - 10. An NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) inspection.

- Q. The inspector is not required to move any obstruction including, but not limited to: equipment, furniture, coverings, debris, and foliage.
- R. The inspector is not required to inspect storm or thermo-pane windows and doors.
- S. The inspector is not required to evaluate every individual component if it is typically replicated throughout the property; a representative sampling may be obtained.
- T. The following definitions shall be used for these Standards:
 - 1. Accessible Component – A component that may, in the opinion of the inspector, be reached without risking the health of any person, without the inspector moving obstructions, and without risking damage to property.
 - 2. Aesthetic – Concerning beauty and taste; not essential to the operation of a component.
 - 3. Building – The subject of an inspection.
 - 4. Component – A part of the inspected property.
 - 5. Contract – An agreement between two parties that is enforceable by law.
 - 6. Describe – To write down the type of component or other characteristics that distinguish a component from others used for the same purpose.
 - 7. Determine – To uncover a fact through investigation.
 - 8. Evaluate –
 - a. Report the presence of a component, if present.
 - b. Report the absence of a component, if required for safety.
 - c. Attempt to visually observe the component.
 - d. Attempt to operate the component using normal operating controls, if applicable.
 - e. Report any readily visible, significant deficiencies.
 - 9. Hazard – That which exposes humans and other living creatures to danger or harm.

10. Home Inspection – A non-intrusive, visual assessment of a set of components (agreed upon by the Client and Inspector prior to the home inspection) on a residential property.
11. Inspect – To examine or evaluate components using the guidelines set forth by these Standards.
12. Inspector – A person hired to perform a home inspection using these Standards.
13. Operate – To use normal operating controls to cause a component to function or turn on.
14. Normal Operation -
15. Normal Operating Controls – Components that may be operated with no specialized knowledge or skill (oven knobs, thermostats, etc.)
16. Representative Sampling – Evaluating a limited number of components that are generally similar to each other at a given property (such as windows and doors).
17. Significant Deficiency –
 - a. Condition that poses an unreasonable safety hazard.
 - b. Condition that significantly decreases the value of the component.
 - c. Component that is not functioning properly.
18. Technically Exhaustive - A detailed examination beyond the scope of a real estate home inspection.

II. Site Work / Exterior

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
 1. Land grade and drainage within six (6) feet of the inspected building(s) and parking structure.
 2. Vegetation that adversely affects the building(s).
 3. Walkways.
 4. Block walls, fences, and gates.
 5. Exterior and security lighting.

6. A representative sampling of screens and windows.
 7. Doors.
 8. Attached awnings, patios, balconies, decks, columns, guardrails, and handrails.
 9. Walls, wall coverings, eaves, fascias, soffits, and trim.
 10. Readily visible exterior portions of chimneys.
 11. Built-in, non-portable pools and spas.
 12. Pool and spa ladders, slides, diving boards, lights, pumps, booster motors, heaters, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI), filters, decking, coping, caulking, enclosures, and valves.
 13. Parking area surfaces.
 14. Handicap parking stall signs, handicap parking stall symbols, handicap curb ramps, and handicap access signs.
- B. The inspector is not required to:
1. Evaluate soil, geological, geotechnical, or hydrological conditions on the site.
 2. Evaluate storm windows or doors, shutters, or awnings.
 3. Operate remote controls for doors and gates, unless there is no alternative method for opening and closing them.
 4. Evaluate the insulation and vapor barriers in exterior walls.
 5. Evaluate any above-ground, free-standing, or moveable pool or spa.
 6. Detect pool leaks.
 7. Evaluate chemical dispensers, computer controls, thermostats, times, sweeps, cleaners, covers, or related components.
 8. Turn on or off pool valves.

III. Foundation / Structure

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
1. Seismic anchoring of building(s) to foundation.
 2. Floor joists, posts, foundation walls, cripple walls, and other structural components.
 3. The slab.
- B. The inspector shall describe the type of:
1. Foundation (spread foundation, concrete slab, etc.).
 2. Footings.

3. Structure.
 4. Bearing walls.
 5. Roof diaphragm.
 6. Roof framing.
- C. The inspector is not required to:
1. Enter any under-floor areas that are less than three (3) feet high.
 2. Enter any access point that is less than eighteen (18) inches high by twenty-four (24) inches wide.

IV. Roof System

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
1. External roof drainage system.
 2. Roof coverings.
 3. Flashings.
 4. Vents, skylights, chimneys, and other appurtenances.
- B. The inspector shall describe:
1. Roof coverings.
 2. Gutter and downspout materials.
 3. The roof type and composition.
- C. The inspector is not required to:
1. Walk on or access a roof sections if it could, in the inspector's opinion, damage the roofing material or be unsafe.
 2. Evaluate installed accessories (antennae, satellite dishes, lighting arresters, etc.).
 3. Operate powered roof ventilators.
 4. Determine the number of roofing layers.

V. Ceiling Cavity, Insulation, and Ventilation

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
1. Roof framing, sheathing, and decking.
 2. Ceiling cavity ventilation, screening, turbines, and fans.

3. Ceiling cavity, wall, and floor insulation.
- B. The inspector is not required to:
1. Enter ceiling cavities where headroom is less than three (3) feet.
 2. Move insulation, identify insulation composition, or determine R-value of insulation material.

VI. Water Service / Plumbing

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
1. Fixtures, faucets, and drains.
 2. Water closes, urinals, and lavatories.
 3. The drain, waste, and vent (DWV) system piping.
 4. Water heating equipment, which includes mounting, seismic strapping, temperature-pressure relief valve, overflow pipe, thermal insulation, plumbing, shut-off valves, and ventilation pipe.
 5. Gas piping and connectors.
 6. Sump pumps not equipped with internal or water-dependent switches.
 7. Sinks, toilets, tubs, and shower enclosures.
- B. The inspector shall determine and report:
1. The static water and dynamic water pressures, unless the spigot is capped or connected to an appliance.
 2. The energy source, capacity, year built, British Thermal Units (BTU), and location of each water heater.
 3. Any potential gas leak to the client or agent of the client as soon as possible.
 4. The types of materials composing the water supply lines.
 5. The types of materials composing the waste piping.
- C. The inspector is not required to:
1. Operate any sewage disposal system (septic tanks, etc), or sump pump.
 2. Evaluate the potability of water.
 3. Determine the length of time for hot water to reach fixtures.
 4. Determine if there a sufficient number and correct spacing of clean-outs.

5. Test safety controls, manual stop valves, or temperature-pressure relief valves.
6. Evaluate the gas supply system for leaks or pressure.
7. Evaluate water, gas, propane, and other storage tanks.
8. Piping, floor drains, and other plumbing necessary to facilitate a specific process, equipment, or function specific to a particular business.

VII. Electrical

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
 1. Light fixtures. Remote controls need not be used, unless there is no alternative.
 2. Switches.
 3. Receptacles.
 4. Service to main.
 5. Ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCI).
 6. Service panels.
 7. Transformers.
 8. Distribution panels.
- B. The inspector shall describe:
 1. The type of service to main (aerial drop or underground lateral).
 2. Wiring methods (conduit, busways, etc.).
 3. Service panel amperage, number of wires, and phase.
 4. Transformer size, phase, high and low voltage, and fuse.
 5. Distribution panels amperage, wires, and phase.
- C. The inspector is not required to:
 1. Measure amperage, voltage, or impedance.
 2. Operate overload protection devices.
 3. Remove dead front covers, panels, or plates that cannot be removed by hand.
 4. Inspect ancillary systems including, but not limited to: burglar alarms, low-voltage relays, antennas, electrical de-icing tapes, vegetation sprinkler wiring, swimming pool wiring, or any component controlled by a timer.

VIII. Heating, Venting, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
 - 1. Heating and cooling equipment.
 - 2. Distribution system including: ducting, ducting insulation, and piping.
 - 3. Operating controls.

- B. The inspector shall describe:
 - 1. The type of heating and cooling equipment.
 - 2. The energy sources for the heating and cooling equipment.
 - 3. Model and serial numbers.
 - 4. Years manufactured.
 - 5. Approximate heating and cooling capacities.
 - 6. Locations.

- C. The inspector is not required to:
 - 1. Open access panels or covers that cannot be opened without a tool.
 - 2. Check the pressure of system coolant.
 - 3. Evaluate electronic thermostats.
 - 4. Determine ducting material.
 - 5. Determine capacity, adequacy, or efficiency of system.
 - 6. Evaluate heat exchangers.
 - 7. Evaluate system accessories including: humidifiers, dehumidifiers, air purifiers, motorized dampers, and heat reclaimers.
 - 8. Evaluate cooling towers.

IX. Fireplaces and Chimneys

- A. The inspector shall evaluate:
 - 1. Chimney exteriors.
 - 2. T-bars.
 - 3. Spark arresters and chimney caps.
 - 4. Crowns and washes.
 - 5. Brickwork and mortar.
 - 6. Flashing.
 - 7. Earthquake ties.
 - 8. Fireboxes and grates.

9. Spark screens and doors.
10. Hearth extensions.
11. Mantels.
12. Dampers.

B. This inspector is not required to:

1. Evaluate the interior of the chimney flues, flue liners, automatic fuel feed devices, combustion make-up air devices, and heat assists.
2. Perform a chimney smoke test.
3. Determine draft characteristics.
4. Light fireplaces.
5. Determine if fireplaces may be safely used.

X. Interior

B. The inspector shall evaluate:

2. Smoke/heat detectors.
3. Walls, ceilings, floors, and trim.
4. Windows, security bars, and panic hardware.
5. Doors.
6. Steps, stairways, handrails, and guardrails.
7. Permanently installed cabinets and countertops.
8. Sinks, toilets, tubs, and shower enclosures.

C. The inspector shall:

1. Report the presence or absence of:
 - a. Fire alarms.
 - b. Smoke/heat detectors.
 - c. A fire sprinkler system.
 - d. Fire extinguishers.
 - e. A security alarm system.
 - f. Safety glass.
2. Report the interior finishing types.
3. Perform an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) inspection and report violations.

D. The inspector is not required to:

1. Evaluate fire sprinklers.
2. Evaluate wall, ceiling, or floor finish treatments such as paint and wallpaper, except for the presence of water damage.
3. Evaluate window or door treatments.
4. Evaluate the mounting of any cabinets or countertops.
5. Evaluate built-in appliances including, but not limited to: garbage disposals, dishwashers, stoves, ovens, trash compactors, and microwaves.