

# NORTH CAROLINA HOME INSPECTOR Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

## Contents:

### CODE OF ETHICS

### STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

1. INTRODUCTION
  2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE
  3. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS
  4. STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS
  5. EXTERIOR
  6. ROOFING
  7. PLUMBING
  8. ELECTRICAL
  9. HEATING
  10. CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING
  11. INTERIORS
  12. INSULATION & VENTILATION
  13. BUILT-IN KITCHEN APPLIANCES
- GLOSSARY*



## LICENSURE BOARD CODE OF ETHICS

*The licensee, by accepting licensure by the North Carolina Home Inspector Licensure Board, recognizes that it is a privilege to perform inspections in the state of North Carolina, and agrees to abide by the following CODE OF ETHICS.*

1. The keystone of professional conduct is integrity. The licensees will discharge their duties with fidelity to the public, their clients, and with fairness and impartiality to all.
2. Opinions expressed by licensees should only be based on their education, experience and honest convictions.
3. The licensee will not disclose any information concerning the results of the inspection without the approval of the client for whom the inspection was performed, or their designated representative.
4. The licensee will not accept compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one interested party for the same service without the consent of all interested parties.
5. The licensee will not accept nor offer commissions or allowances, directly or indirectly, from other parties dealing with the client in connection with work for which the licensee is responsible.
6. An appraisal or opinion of the market value of the inspected property will not be expressed by the licensee within the context of the inspection.
7. The licensee will promptly disclose to the client any interest in a business which may affect the client. The licensee will not allow an interest in any business to affect the quality or results of the inspection work which the licensee may be called upon to perform.
8. Licensees should not engage in false or misleading advertising or otherwise misrepresent any matters to the public.

# STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1 The Standards of Practice established by this section are authorized by Chapter 143, Article 9F of the NC General Statutes (The Home Inspector Licensure Act) and are the minimum standards of practice required of Licensed Home Inspectors and Licensed Associate Home Inspectors. Hereinafter, the term home inspectors refers to both Licensed Home Inspectors and Licensed Associate Home Inspectors.**

### 1.2 These Standards of Practice

- A. provide home inspection guidelines
- B. make public the services provided by home inspectors
- C. define certain terms relating to these inspections

(Note: *Italicized* words are defined in the Glossary section)

## 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

### 2.1 Home inspections performed according to these Standards of Practice shall:

- A. provide the client with a better understanding of the property conditions, as *observed* at the time of the home inspection

### 2.2 Home inspectors shall:

A. provide a written, signed contract which shall:

- 1. state that the home inspection is in accordance with the Standards of Practice of the North Carolina Home Inspector Licensure Board
- 2. describe what services will be provided, and their cost
- 3. state, when an inspection is for only one or a limited number of *systems* or *components*, that the inspection is limited to only those *systems* or *components*

B. *observe* readily visible and accessible *installed systems* and *components* listed in these Standards of Practice

C. submit a written report to the client which shall:

- 1. describe those *systems* and *components* specified to be described in Sections 4 through 13 of these Standards of Practice
- 2. state which *systems* and *components* designated for inspection in these Standards of Practice have been inspected, and state any *systems* or *components* designated for inspection which were not inspected, and the reason for not inspecting
- 3. state any *systems* or *components* so inspected which do not function as intended, allowing for normal wear and tear, and/or adversely affect the habitability of the dwelling
- 4. the name, license number, and signature of the person supervising the inspection and the name, license number, and signature of the person conducting the inspection

### 2.3 These Standards of Practice are not intended to limit home inspectors from:

A. reporting observations and conditions or rendering opinions of items in addition to those required in Section 2.2

B. excluding *systems* and *components* from the inspection if requested by the client, and so stated in the written contract

### 3. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

#### 3.1 General limitations:

A. inspections done in accordance with these Standards of Practice are visual and are not *technically exhaustive*

B. these Standards of Practice are applicable to buildings with four or less dwelling units, and individually owned residential units within multifamily buildings, and their attached garages or carports.

#### 3.2 General exclusions:

A. Home inspectors are NOT required to report on:

1. life expectancy of any *component* or *system*
2. the causes of the need for a 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 codes, ordinances, statutes, regulatory requirements or restrictions
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 organisms, rodents, or insects
10. cosmetic items, underground items, or items not permanently *installed*

B. Home 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, electrical or any other job function requiring an occupational license in the jurisdiction where the inspection is taking place, unless the home inspector holds a valid occupational license, in which case the home inspector may inform the client that the home inspector is so licensed, and is therefore qualified to go beyond these Standards of Practice and perform additional inspections beyond those within the scope of the basic 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 home inspector or other persons
6. *operate* any *system* or *component* which is *shut down* or otherwise inoperable
7. *operate* any *system* or *component* which does not respond to *normal operating controls*
8. disturb insulation, move personal items, panels, furniture, equipment, plant life, soil, snow, ice, or debris which obstructs access or visibility
9. determine the presence or absence of any suspected adverse environmental condition or hazardous substance, including but not limited to toxins, carcinogens, noise, contaminants in the building or in soil, water, and air
10. determine the effectiveness of any *system installed* to control or remove suspected hazardous substances
11. predict future condition, including but not limited to failure of components
12. project operating costs of *components*
13. evaluate acoustical characteristics of any *system* or *component*
14. *observe* special equipment or accessories which are not listed as *components* to be *observed* in these Standards of Practice

**3.3 Limitations and exclusions specific to individual *systems* or *components* are listed in following sections.**

### 4. SYSTEM: STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

#### 4.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:

A. *structural components* including:

1. foundation
2. floors
3. walls
4. columns/piers

- 5. ceilings
- 6. roofs

#### **4.2 The home inspector shall**

A. *describe* the type of:

- 1. foundation
- 2. floor structure
- 3. wall structure
- 4. columns/piers
- 5. ceiling structure
- 6. roof structure

B. probe *structural components* where deterioration is suspected, except where probing would damage any surface

C. enter *underfloor crawl spaces*, basements, 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 *underfloor crawl spaces* and attics

F. report signs of abnormal or harmful water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building *components*

#### **5. SYSTEM: EXTERIOR**

##### **5.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:**

A. wall cladding, flashings and trim

B. entryway doors and a *representative number* of windows

C. garage door operators

D. decks, balconies, stoops, steps, areaways, porches and applicable railings

E. eaves, soffits and fascias

F. vegetation, grading, drainage, driveways, patios, walkways and retaining walls with respect to their effect on the condition of the building

##### **5.2 The home inspector shall:**

A. *describe* wall cladding materials

B. *operate* all entryway doors and a *representative number* of windows

C. *operate* garage doors manually or by using permanently *installed* controls for any garage door operator

D. report whether or not any garage door operator will automatically reverse or stop when meeting reasonable resistance during closing

##### **5.3 The home inspector is NOT required to *observe*:**

A. storm windows, storm doors, screening, shutters, awnings and similar seasonal accessories

B. fences

- C. presence of safety glazing in doors and windows
- D. garage door operator remote control transmitters
- F. geological conditions
- F. soil conditions
- G. recreational facilities (including, but not limited to spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment, or athletic facilities)
- H. detached buildings or structures
- I. presence or condition of buried fuel storage tanks

## **6. SYSTEM: ROOFING**

### **6.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:**

- A. roof coverings
- B. *roof drainage systems*
- C. flashings
- D. skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations
- F. signs of leaks or abnormal condensation on building *components*

### **6.2 The home inspector shall:**

- A. *describe* the type of roof covering materials
- B. report the methods used to *observe* the roofing

### **6.3 The home inspector is NOT required to:**

- A. walk on the roofing
- B. *observe* attached accessories including but not limited to solar *systems*, antennae, and lightning arrestors

## **7. SYSTEM: PLUMBING**

### **7.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:**

- A. interior water supply and distribution *system* including:
  - 1. piping materials, including supports and insulation
  - 2. fixtures and faucets
  - 3. *functional flow*
  - 4. leaks
  - 5. *cross connections*
- B. interior drain, waste and vent *system*, including:
  - 1. traps; drain, waste, and vent piping; piping supports and pipe insulation

2. leaks
3. *functional drainage*

C. hot water systems including:

1. water heating equipment
2. *normal operating controls*
3. *automatic safety controls*
4. chimneys, flues, and vents.

D. fuel storage and distribution *systems* including:

1. interior fuel storage equipment, supply piping, venting, and supports
2. leaks

F. sump pump

### **7.2 The home inspector shall:**

A. *describe*:

1. water supply and distribution piping materials
2. drain, waste, and vent piping materials
3. water heating equipment
4. location of main water supply shutoff device

B. *operate* all plumbing fixtures, including their faucets and all exterior faucets attached to the house, except where the flow end of the faucet is connected to an appliance

### **7.3 The home inspector is NOT required to:**

A. state the effectiveness of anti-siphon devices

B. determine whether water supply and waste disposal *systems* are public or private

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 waste disposal *Systems*
5. foundation irrigation *systems*
6. spas, except as to *functional flow* and *functional drainage*
7. swimming pools
8. solar water heating equipment

F. *observe* the *system* for proper sizing, design, or use of proper materials

## **8. SYSTEM: ELECTRICAL**

### **8.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:**

- A. service entrance conductors
- B. service equipment, grounding equipment, main overcurrent device, main and distribution panels
- C. amperage and voltage ratings of the service
- D. branch circuit conductors, their overcurrent devices, and the compatibility of their ampacities and voltages
- E. the operation of a *representative number of installed* ceiling fans, lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles located inside the house, garage, and on the dwelling's 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
- H. Smoke detectors

**8.2 The home 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

C. report on presence or absence of smoke detectors, and *operate* their test function, if accessible, except when detectors are part of a central system.

**8.3 The home inspector is NOT required to:**

A. insert any tool, probe, or testing device inside the panels

B. test or *operate* any overcurrent 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. security system devices, heat detectors, or carbon monoxide detectors.
- 3. telephone, security, cable TV, intercoms, or other ancillary wiring that is not a part of the primary electrical distribution system
- 4. built-in vacuum equipment

**9. SYSTEM: HEATING**

**9.1 The home 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, where readily visible
5. *solid fuel heating devices*
6. heat distribution systems including fans, pumps, ducts and piping, with supports, insulation, air filters, registers, radiators, fan coil units, convectors
7. the presence of an *installed* heat source in each room

**9.2 The home inspector shall:**

A. *describe:*

1. energy source
2. heating equipment and distribution 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

**9.3 The home 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. SYSTEM: CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING**

**10.1 The home inspector shall observe**

A. *central air conditioning systems* including:

1. cooling and air handling equipment
2. *normal operating controls*

B. distribution systems including:

1. fans, pumps, ducts and piping, with associated supports, dampers, insulation, air filters, registers, fan-coil units
2. the presence of an *installed* cooling source in each room

**10.2 The home 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 home inspector is NOT required to:**

A. *operate* cooling systems when 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. SYSTEM: INTERIORS**

**11.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:**

A. walls, ceiling, and floors

B. steps, stairways, balconies, and railings

C. counters and a *representative number* of cabinets

D. a *representative number* of doors and windows

**11.2 The home inspector shall:**

A. *operate* a *representative number* of windows and interior doors

B. report signs of abnormal or harmful water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building *components*

**11.3 The home inspector is NOT required to *observe*:**

A. paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments on the interior walls, ceilings, and floors

B. carpeting

C. draperies, blinds, or other window treatments

**12. SYSTEM: INSULATION & VENTILATION**

**12.1 The home inspector shall *observe*:**

A. insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces

B. ventilation of attics and foundation areas

C. kitchen, bathroom, and laundry venting *systems*

D. the *operation* of any readily accessible attic ventilation fan, and, when temperature permits, the *operation* of any readily accessible thermostatic control.

**12.2 The home inspector shall *describe*:**

- A. insulation in unfinished spaces
- B. absence of same in unfinished space at conditioned surfaces

**12.3 The home inspector is NOT required to report on:**

- A. concealed insulation and vapor retarders
- B. venting equipment which is integral with household appliances

**13. BUILT-IN KITCHEN APPLIANCES**

**13.1 The home inspector shall *observe* and *operate* the basic functions of the following kitchen appliances:**

- A. permanently *installed* dishwasher, through its normal cycle
- B. range, cook top, and permanently *installed* oven
- C. trash compactor
- D. garbage disposer
- E. ventilation equipment or range hood
- F. permanently *installed* microwave oven

**13.2 The home inspector is NOT required to *observe***

- A. clocks, timers, self-cleaning oven function, or thermostats for calibration or automatic operation
- B. non built-in appliances
- C. refrigeration units

**13.3 The home inspector is not required to *operate***

- A. appliances in use
- B. any appliance which is *shut down* or otherwise inoperable

## **GLOSSARY**

**AUTOMATIC SAFETY CONTROLS:** Devices designed and installed to protect systems and components from excessively high or low pressures and temperatures, excessive electrical current, loss of water, loss of ignition, fuel leaks, fire, freezing, or other unsafe conditions.

**CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING:** A system which uses ducts to distribute cooled and/or dehumidified air to more than one room or uses pipes to distribute chilled water to heat exchangers in more than one room, and which is not plugged into an electrical convenience outlet.

**COMPONENT:** A readily accessible and observable aspect of a system~ such as a floor, or wall, but not individual

pieces such as boards or nails where many similar pieces make up the component.

**CROSS CONNECTION:** Any physical connection or arrangement between potable water and any source of contamination.

**DANGEROUS or ADVERSE SITUATIONS:** Situations which pose a threat of injury to the inspector, or those situations which require the use of special protective clothing or safety equipment.

**DESCRIBE:** Report in writing a system or component by its type, or other observed characteristics, to distinguish it from other components used for the same purpose.

**DISMANTLE:** To take apart or remove any component, device or piece of equipment that is bolted, screwed, or fastened by other means and that would not be dismantled by a homeowner in the course of normal household maintenance

**ENTER:** To go into an area to observe all visible components.

**FUNCTIONAL DRAINAGE:** A drain is functional when it empties in a reasonable amount of time and does not overflow when another fixture is drained simultaneously.

**FUNCTIONAL FLOW:** A reasonable flow at the highest fixture in a dwelling when another fixture is operated simultaneously.

**INSTALLED:** Attached or connected such that the installed item requires tools for removal.

**NORMAL OPERATING CONTROLS:** Homeowner operated devices such as a thermostat, wall switch, or safety switch.

**OBSERVE:** The act of making a visual examination.

**ON-SITE WATER SUPPLY QUALITY:** Water quality is based on the bacterial, chemical, mineral, and solids content of the water.

**ON-SITE WATER SUPPLY QUANTITY:** Water quantity is the rate of flow of water.

**OPERATE:** To cause systems or equipment to function.

**READILY OPENABLE ACCESS PANEL:** A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance which has removable or operable fasteners or latch devices in order to be lifted off, swung open, or otherwise removed by one person, and its edges and fasteners are not painted in place. Limited to those panels within normal reach or from a 4-foot stepladder, and which are not blocked by stored items, furniture, or building components.

**REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER:** For multiple identical components such as windows and electrical outlets - one such component per room. For multiple identical exterior components- one such component on each side of the building.

**ROOF DRAINAGE SYSTEMS:** Gutters, downspouts, leaders, splash blocks, and similar components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

**SHUT DOWN:** A piece of equipment or a system is shut down when it cannot be operated by the device or control which a home owner should normally use to operate it. If its safety switch or circuit breaker is in the "off " position, or its fuse is missing or blown, the inspector is not required to reestablish the circuit for the purpose of operating the equipment or system.

**SOLID FUEL HEATING DEVICE:** Any wood, coal, or other similar organic fuel burning device, including but not limited to fireplaces whether masonry or factory built, fireplace inserts and stoves, woodstoves (room heaters), central furnaces, and combinations of these devices.

**STRUCTURAL COMPONENT:** A component which 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 inspection is technically exhaustive when it involves the extensive use of measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, and other means to develop scientific or engineering findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

**UNDERFLOOR CRAWL SPACE:** The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the lowest floor structural component.