



# National Association of Certified Home Inspectors

1220 Valley Forge Road, Building 47  
P.O. Box 987  
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0987

Phone: (610) 933-4241  
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## Standards of Practice

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## 1. Definitions and Scope

- 1.1.** A “*home inspection*” is a non-invasive visual examination of some combination of the mechanical, electrical, or plumbing *systems* or the structural and essential components of a residential dwelling designed to identify *observed material defects* in those *systems* and *components* and performed for a fee in connection with or in preparation for a proposed or possible residential real estate transfer.
- I. A *home inspection* is intended to assist in evaluation of the overall *condition* of the dwelling. The inspection is based on observation of the visible and apparent *condition* of the structure and its components on the date of the inspection and not the determination of future *conditions*.
  - II. A *home inspection* will not reveal every problem that exists or ever could exist, but only those *material defects observed* on the day of the inspection.
- 1.2.** A “*material defect*” is a problem with a residential real property or any portion of it that would have a significant adverse impact on the value of the property or that involves an unreasonable risk to people on the property. The fact that a structural element, *system* or subsystem is near, at or beyond the end of the normal useful life of such a structural element, *system* or subsystem is not by itself a *material defect*.



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- 1.3. An “inspection *report*” shall *describe* and identify in written format the inspected *systems*, structures, and *components* of the dwelling and shall identify *material defects observed*. Inspection *reports* may contain recommendations regarding *conditions* reported or recommendations for correction, monitoring or further evaluation by professionals.



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## 2. Standards of Practice

### 2.1. Roof

- I. The inspector shall inspect from ground level or eaves:
  - A. The roof covering.
  - B. The gutters.
  - C. The downspouts.
  - D. The vents, flashings, skylights, chimney and other roof penetrations.
  - E. The general structure of the roof from the *readily accessible* panels, doors or stairs.
  
- II. The inspector is not required to:
  - A. Walk on any roof surface.
  - B. Predict the service life expectancy.
  - C. Inspect underground downspout diverter drainage pipes.
  - D. Remove snow, ice, debris or other *conditions* that prohibit the observation of the roof surfaces.
  - E. Inspect antennae, lightning arresters, or similar attachments.



## 2.2. Exterior

- I. The inspector shall inspect:
  - A. The flashing and trim.
  - B. All exterior doors, decks, stoops, steps, stairs, porches, railings, eaves, soffits, fascias, grading, and walkways.
  - C. And report as in need of repair any spacings between intermediate balusters, spindles, or rails for steps, stairways, balconies, and railings that permit the passage of an object greater than four inches in diameter.
  - D. The vegetation, surface drainage and retaining walls when these are likely to *adversely affect* the building.
  - E. And *describe* the exterior wallcovering.
  
- II. The inspector is not required to:
  - A. Inspect or *operate* screens, storm windows, shutters, awnings, fences, outbuildings, or exterior accent lighting.
  - B. Inspect items, including window and door flashings, which are not visible or *readily accessible* from the ground.
  - C. Inspect geological, geotechnical, or hydrological *conditions*.
  - D. Inspect *recreational facilities*.
  - E. Inspect seawalls, break-walls and docks.
  - F. Inspect erosion control and earth stabilization measures.
  - G. Inspect for safety type glass.
  - H. Inspect underground utilities.



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- I. Inspect underground items.
- J. Inspect wells or springs.
- K. Inspect solar *systems*.
- L. Inspect swimming pools or spas.
- M. Inspect septic *systems* or cesspools.
- N. Inspect playground equipment.
- O. Inspect sprinkler *systems*.
- P. Inspect drainfields or drywells.
- Q. *Determine* the integrity of the thermal window seals or damaged glass.

### **2.3. Basement, Foundation & Crawlspace**

- I. The inspector shall inspect:
  - A. The basement.
  - B. The *foundation*
  - C. The *crawlspace*.
  - D. The visible *structural components*.
  - E. Any present *conditions* or indications of active water penetration by probing a representative sampling of *structural components* where deterioration is believed to be present or where clear indications of deterioration are present.
  - F. And report any general indications of *foundation* movement that are *observed*, such as but not limited to sheetrock cracks, brick cracks, out-of-square door frames or floor slopes.
  
- II. The inspector is not required to:



- A. *Enter any crawlspaces* that are not *readily accessible* or where entry could cause damage or pose a hazard to the inspector in his or her opinion.
- B. Move stored items or debris.
- C. *Operate* sump pumps with inaccessible floats.
- D. Identify size, spacing, span, location or adequacy of *foundation* bolting, bracing, joists or support systems.
- E. Provide any *engineering* or *architectural service*.
- F. Report on the adequacy of any *structural system* or *component*.

## 2.4. Heating

- I. The inspector shall inspect:
  - A. The heating *system* and *describe* the energy source and heating method using *normal operating controls*.
  - B. And report as in need of repair electric furnaces which do not *operate*.
  - C. And report if inspector deemed the furnace inaccessible.
- II. The inspector is not required to:
  - A. Inspect or *evaluate* interiors of flues or chimneys, fire chambers, the heat exchanger, the humidifier or dehumidifier, the electronic air filter, solar heating *systems* or fuel tanks.
  - B. Inspect underground fuel tanks.



- C. *Determine* the uniformity, temperature, flow, balance, distribution, size, capacity, BTU, or supply adequacy of the heating *system*.
- D. Light pilot flames.
- E. *Activate* heating, heat pump *systems*, or other heating *systems* when ambient temperatures or other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.
- F. *Operate* electronic thermostats.
- G. *Evaluate* fuel quality.

## 2.5. Cooling

- I. The inspector shall inspect:
  - A. The central cooling equipment using *normal operating controls*.
- II. The inspector is not required to:
  - A. *Determine* the uniformity, temperature, flow, balance, distribution, size, capacity, BTU, or supply adequacy of the cooling *system*.
  - B. Inspect window units, through-wall units, or electronic air filters.
  - C. *Operate* equipment or *systems* if exterior temperature is below 60 degrees Fahrenheit or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or may damage the equipment.
  - D. Inspect or *determine* thermostat calibration, heat anticipation or automatic setbacks or clocks.



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- E. *Examine* electrical current, coolant fluids or gasses, or coolant leakage.

## 2.6. Plumbing

- I. The inspector shall:
  - A. Inspect the main water shut off valve.
  - B. Inspect the water heating *system*.
  - C. Flush toilets.
  - D. Run water in sinks, tubs, and showers.
  - E. Inspect the interior water supply including all fixtures and faucets.
  - F. Inspect the drain, waste and vent *systems*, including all fixtures.
  - G. Describe any visible fuel storage *systems*.
  - H. Inspect the drainage sump pumps testing sumps with accessible floats.
  - I. Inspect and *describe* the water supply, drain, waste and main fuel shut-off valves, as well as the location of the water main and main fuel shut-off valves.
  - J. Inspect and *determine* if the water supply is public or private.
  - K. Inspect and report as in need of repair deficiencies in the water supply by viewing the *functional* flow in two fixtures *operated* simultaneously.



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- L. *Inspect* and report as in need of repair deficiencies in installation and identification of hot and cold faucets.
  - M. *Inspect* and report as in need of repair mechanical drain-stops that are missing or do not *operate* if *installed* in sinks, lavatories and tubs.
  - N. *Inspect* and report as in need of repair commodes that have cracks in the ceramic material, are improperly mounted on the floor, leak, or have tank *components* which do not *operate*.
- II. The *inspector* is not required to:
- A. Light pilot flames.
  - B. *Determine* the size, temperature, age, life expectancy or adequacy of the water heater.
  - C. *Inspect* interiors of flues or chimneys, water softening or filtering *systems*, well pumps or tanks, safety or shut-of valves, floor drains or sprinkler *systems*.
  - D. *Determine* the flow, volume, pressure, temperature, or adequacy of the water supply.
  - E. *Determine* the water quality or potability or the reliability of the water supply or source.
  - F. Open closed plumbing access panels.
  - G. *Inspect* clothes washing machine connections.
  - H. *Operate* any main, branch or fixture valve except fixture faucets and hose faucets attached to the building.
  - I. Test shower pans, tub and shower surrounds or enclosures for leakage.
  - J. *Evaluate* the compliance with local or state conservation or energy standards, or the proper



- design or sizing of any water, waste or venting components, fixtures or piping.
- K. *Determine* the effectiveness of anti-siphon, back-flow prevention or drain-stop devices.
  - L. *Determine* whether there are sufficient clean-outs for effective cleaning of drains.
  - M. *Evaluate* gas, liquid propane or oil storage tanks.
  - N. Excavate or otherwise uncover the private sewage system or its components to determine size, adequacy or efficiency.
  - O. *Inspect* water treatment systems or water filters.
  - P. *Inspect* pressure pumps or bladder tanks.

## 2.7. Electrical

- I. The *inspector* shall *inspect*:
  - A. The service line.
  - B. The meter box.
  - C. The main disconnect.
  - D. The service amperage.
  - E. Panels, breakers and fuses.
  - F. The grounding.
  - G. The bonding.
  - H. A representative sampling of switches, receptacles, light fixtures, and ground circuit interrupters.
  - I. And report the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring if readily visible.
  - J. And report as in need of repair a receptacle in which power is not present, polarity is incorrect, a unit is not grounded, there is evidence of arcing or excessive heat, the unit is not secured to the wall, the cover is not in place, or the ground fault circuit



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- interruption devices are not properly *installed*, or do not *operate* properly as shown by the use of extension cords.
- K. The service entrance conductors and the *condition* of their sheathing.
  - L. The ground fault circuit interrupters.
  - M. And *describe* the amperage and voltage rating of the service.
  - N. And report the absence of smoke detectors.
  - O. Service entrance cables and report as in need of repair deficiencies in the integrity of the insulation, drip loop, or separation of conductors at weatherheads and clearances.
- II. The *inspector* is not required to:
- A. Insert any tool, probe or device into the main or sub-panels.
  - B. *Operate* electrical *systems* that are *shut down*.
  - C. Remove panel covers or dead front covers if not *readily accessible*.
  - D. *Operate* over current protection devices.
  - E. *Operate* non-*accessible* smoke detectors.
  - F. Measure or *determine* the amperage or voltage of the main service if not visibly labeled.
  - G. *Inspect* the *alarm system* and *components*.
  - H. *Inspect* the ancillary wiring.
  - I. *Activate* any electrical *systems* or branch circuits which are not energized.
  - J. *Operate* overload devices.
  - K. *Inspect* low voltage *systems*, electrical de-icing tapes, swimming pool wiring or any time-controlled devices.



- L. *Verify* the continuity of the connected service ground.
- M. *Inspect* private or emergency electrical supply sources, including but not limited to generators, windmills, photovoltaic solar collectors, or battery or electrical storage facility.
- N. *Inspect* spark or lightning arrestors.
- O. Conduct drop voltage calculations.
- P. *Determine* the accuracy of breaker labeling.

## 2.8. Fireplace

- I. The *inspector* shall *inspect*:
  - A. The fireplace, and open and close the damper door if *readily accessible* and operable.
  - B. Hearth extensions and other permanently *installed components*.
  - C. And report as in need of repair deficiencies in the lintel, hearth and material surrounding the fireplace, including clearance from combustible materials
  
- II. The *inspector* is not required to:
  - A. *Inspect* the vent system.
  - B. *Inspect* the interior of the chimney or flue, fire doors or screens, seals or mantels.
  - C. *Determine* the need for a chimney sweep.
  - D. *Operate* gas fireplace inserts.
  - E. Light pilot flames.



- F. *Determine* the appropriateness of such installation.
- G. *Inspect* automatic fuel feed devices.
- H. *Inspect* combustion make up devices.
- I. *Inspect* heat distribution assists whether gravity controlled or fan assisted.
- J. Ignite or extinguish fires.
- K. *Determine* draft characteristics.
- L. Move fireplace inserts, stoves, or firebox contents.
- M. *Determine* adequacy of draft, perform a smoke test or *dismantle* or remove any *component*.

## 2.9. Attic, Ventilation & Insulation

- I. The *inspector* shall *inspect*:
  - A. The insulation in unfinished spaces.
  - B. The ventilation of attic spaces.
  - C. Mechanical ventilation *systems*.
  - D. And report the absence or lack of insulation.
  
- II. The *inspector* is not required to:
  - A. *Enter* the attic or unfinished spaces that are not *readily accessible* or where entry could cause damage or pose a safety hazard to the *inspector* in his or her opinion.
  - B. To move or touch insulation.
  - C. To move or touch vapor retarders.
  - D. Break or otherwise damage the surface finish or weather seal on or around access panels and covers.



- E. Identify the composition or “R” value of insulation material.
- F. *Activate* thermostatically *operated* fans.
- G. *Determine* the types of materials used in insulation/wrapping of pipes, ducts, jackets, boilers, and wiring.

## 2.10. Doors, Windows & Interior

- I. The *inspector* shall:
  - A. Open and close a *representative number* of doors and windows.
  - B. *Inspect* the walls, ceilings, steps, stairways, and railings.
  - C. *Inspect* garage doors and garage door openers by operating first by hand and then by the *installed* automatic door control.
  - D. And report as in need of repair any *installed* electronic sensors that are not operable or not *installed* at proper heights above the garage door.
  - E. And report as in need of repair any door locks or side ropes that have not been removed or disabled when garage door opener is in use.
  - F. And report as in need of repair any windows that are obviously fogged or display other evidence of broken seals.



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- II. The *inspector* is not required to:
- A. *Inspect* paint, wallpaper, window treatments or finish treatments.
  - B. *Inspect* central vacuum *systems*.
  - C. *Inspect* safety *glazing* in locations subject to human impact.
  - D. *Inspect* security *components*.
  - E. *Evaluate* the fastening of countertops, cabinets, sink tops and fixtures, or firewall compromises.
  - F. Move furniture, stored items, or any coverings like carpets or rugs in order to *inspect* the concealed floor structure.
  - G. Move drop ceiling tiles.
  - H. *Inspect* or move any household *appliances*.
  - I. *Inspect* or *operate* equipment housed in the garage except as otherwise noted.
  - J. *Verify* or certify safe operation of any auto reverse or related safety *function* of a garage door.
  - K. *Operate* or *evaluate* security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including compliance with local, state, or federal standards.
  - L. *Operate* any *system*, *appliance* or *component* that requires the use of special keys, codes, combinations, or devices.
  - M. *Operate* or *evaluate* self-cleaning oven cycles or signal lights.
  - N. *Determine* leakage from microwave ovens.
  - O. *Operate* or *examine* any sauna, steam-jenny, kiln, toaster, ice-maker, coffee-maker, can-opener, bread-warmer, blender, instant hot water dispenser, or other small, ancillary devices.



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- P. *Inspect elevators.*
- Q. *Inspect central vacuums.*
- R. *Inspect appliances.*
- S. *Inspect items not permanently installed.*
- T. *Examine or operate any above-ground, movable, freestanding, or otherwise non-permanently installed pool/spa or self-contained equipment.*
- U. *Come into contact with any pool or spa water in order to determine the system structure or components.*
- V. *Determine the adequacy of spa jet water force or bubble effect.*
- W. *Determine the structural integrity or leakage of a pool or spa.*



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### 3. Limitations, Exceptions & Exclusions

#### 3.1. Limitations:

- I. An inspection is not *technically exhaustive*.
- II. An inspection will not identify concealed or latent defects.
- III. An inspection will not deal with aesthetic concerns or what could be deemed “matters of taste,” “cosmetic,” etc.
- IV. An inspection will not *determine* the suitability of the property for any use.
- V. An inspection does not *determine* the market value of the property or its marketability.
- VI. An inspection does not *determine* the advisability or inadvisability of the purchase of the *inspected property*.
- VII. An inspection does not *determine* the life expectancy of the property or any *components* or *systems* therein.
- VIII. An inspection does not include items not permanently *installed*.
- IX. These Standards of Practice apply only to homes with four or fewer dwelling units.

#### 3.2. Exclusions:

- I. The *inspectors* are not required to *determine*:
  - A. Property boundary lines or encroachments.
  - B. The *condition* of any *component* or *system* that is not *readily accessible*.
  - C. The service life expectancy of any *component* or *system*.



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- D. The size, capacity, BTU, performance, or efficiency of any *component* or *system*.
- E. The cause or reason of any *condition*.
- F. The cause for the need of repair or replacement of any *system* or *component*.
- G. Future *conditions*.
- H. The compliance with codes or regulations.
- I. The presence of potentially harmful rodents, animals or insects.
- J. The presence of mold, mildew or fungus.
- K. The presence of air-borne hazards.
- L. The presence of birds.
- M. The presence of other flora or fauna.
- N. The air quality.
- O. The existence of asbestos.
- P. The existence of environmental hazards.
- Q. The existence of electro-magnetic fields.
- R. The presence of hazardous materials including, but not limited to, the presence of lead in paint.
- S. Any hazardous waste *conditions*.
- T. Any manufacturer's recalls or conformance with manufacturer's installation or any information included in the consumer protection bulletin.
- U. Operating costs of *systems*.
- V. Replacement or repair cost estimates.
- W. The acoustical properties of any *systems*.
- X. Estimates of how much it will cost to run any given *system*.



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- II. The *inspectors* are not required to *operate*:
- A. Any *system* that is *shut down*.
  - B. Any *system* that does not *function* properly.
  - C. Or *evaluate* low voltage electrical *systems* such as, but not limited to:
    - 1. Phone lines.
    - 2. Cable lines.
    - 3. Antennae.
    - 4. Lights.
    - 5. Remote controls.
  - D. Any *system* that does not turn on with the use of *normal operating controls*.
  - E. Any shut off valve.
  - F. Any electrical disconnect or over current protection devices.
  - G. Any *alarm systems*.
  - H. Moisture meters, gas detectors or similar equipment.
- III. The *inspectors* are not required to:
- A. Move any personal items or other obstructions, such as, but not limited to:
    - 1. Throw rugs.
    - 2. Furniture.
    - 3. Floor or wall coverings.
    - 4. Ceiling tiles
    - 5. Window coverings.
    - 6. Equipment.
    - 7. Plants.
    - 8. Ice.
    - 9. Debris.
    - 10. Snow.



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11. Water.
  12. Dirt.
  13. Foliage.
  14. Pets
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- B. *Dismantle, open, or uncover any system or component.*
  - C. *Enter or access any area which may, in the opinion of the inspector, to be unsafe or compromise the inspector's personal safety.*
  - D. *Enter crawlspaces or other areas that are unsafe or not readily accessible.*
  - E. *Inspect underground items such as, but not limited to, underground storage tanks or other indications of their presence, whether abandoned or actively used.*
  - F. *Do anything which, in the inspector's opinion, is likely to be unsafe or dangerous to the inspector or others or damage property, such as, but not limited to, walking on roof surfaces, climbing ladders, entering attic spaces or negotiating with dogs.*
  - G. *Inspect decorative items.*
  - H. *Inspect common elements or areas in multi-unit housing.*
  - I. *Inspect intercoms, speaker systems, radio-controlled, security devices or lawn irrigation systems.*
  - J. *Offer guarantees or warranties.*
  - K. *Offer or perform any engineering services.*
  - L. *Offer or perform any trade or professional service other than home inspection.*
  - M. *Research the history of the property, report on its potential for alteration, modification,*



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extendibility, or its suitability for a specific or proposed use for occupancy.

- N. *Determine* the age of construction or installation of any *system* structure, or *component* of a building, or differentiate between original construction or subsequent additions, improvements, renovations or replacements thereto.
- O. *Determine* the insurability of a property.



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## 4. Glossary of Terms

- 4.1. **Accessible:** Can be approached or **entered** by the **inspector** safely, without difficulty, fear or danger.
- 4.2. **Activate:** To turn on, supply power, or enable **systems**, equipment, or devices to become active by **normal operating controls**. Examples include turning on the gas or water supply valves to the fixtures and **appliances** and activating electrical breakers or fuses.
- 4.3. **Adversely Affect:** Constitute, or potentially constitute, a negative or destructive impact.
- 4.4. **Alarm System:** Warning devices, **installed** or free-standing, including but not limited to: Carbon monoxide detectors, flue gas and other spillage detectors, security equipment, ejector pumps and smoke alarms.
- 4.5. **Appliance:** A household device **operated** by use of electricity or gas. Not included in this definition are **components** covered under central heating, central cooling or plumbing.
- 4.6. **Architectural Service:** Any practice involving the art and science of building design for construction of any structure or grouping of structures and the use of space within and surrounding the structures or the design,



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design development, preparation of construction contract documents, and administration of the construction contract.

- 4.7. **Component:** A permanently **installed** or attached fixture, element or part of a **system**.
- 4.8. **Condition:** The visible and conspicuous state of being of an object.
- 4.9. **Crawlspace:** The area within the confines of the **foundation** and between the ground and the underside of the lowest floor **structural component**.
- 4.10. **Decorative:** Ornamental; not required for the operation of essential **systems** and **components** of a home.
- 4.11. **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.
- 4.12. **Determine:** To arrive at an opinion or conclusion pursuant to examination.
- 4.13. **Dismantle:** To open, take apart or remove any **component**, device or piece that would not typically be opened, taken apart or removed by an ordinary occupant.



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- 4.14. Engineering Service:** Any professional service or creative work requiring engineering education, training, and experience and the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical and engineering sciences to such professional service or creative work as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design and supervision of construction for the purpose of assuring compliance with the specifications and design, in conjunction with structures, buildings, machines, equipment, works or processes.
- 4.15. Enter:** To go into an area to **observe** all visible **components**.
- 4.16. Evaluate:** To assess the **systems**, structures or **components** of a dwelling.
- 4.17. Examine:** To visually look. See **Inspect**.
- 4.18. Foundation:** The base upon which the structure or wall rests; usually masonry, concrete, or stone, and generally partially underground.
- 4.19. Function:** The action for which an item, component, or **system** is specially fitted or used or for which an item, component or **system** exists; to be in action or perform a task.
- 4.20. Functional:** Performing, or able to perform, a **function**.



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**4.21. Home Inspection:** The process by which an **inspector** visually **examines** the **readily accessible systems** and **components** of a home and **operates** those **systems** and **components** utilizing these Standards of Practice as a guideline.

**4.22. Household Appliances:** Kitchen and laundry **appliances**, room air conditioners, and similar **appliances**.

**4.23. Inspect:** To visually look at **readily accessible systems** and **components** safely, using **normal operating controls** and accessing **readily accessible** panels and areas.

**4.24. Inspected Property:** The **readily accessible** areas of the buildings, site, items, **components**, and **systems** included in the inspection.

**4.25. Inspector:** One who performs a real estate inspection.

**4.26. Installed:** Attached or connected such that the **installed** item requires tool for removal.

**4.27. Material Defect:** Refer to section 1.2.

**4.28. Normal Operating Controls:** Devices such as thermostats that would be **operated** by ordinary occupants which require no specialized skill or knowledge.



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- 4.29. Observe:** To see through visually directed attention.
- 4.30. Operate:** To cause **systems** to **function** or turn on with **normal operating controls**.
- 4.31. Readily Accessible:** An item or **component** is **readily accessible** if, in the judgment of the **inspector**, it is capable of being safely **observed** without movement of obstacles, detachment or disengagement of connecting or securing devices, or other **unsafe** or difficult procedures to gain access.
- 4.32. Recreational Facilities:** Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment or athletic facilities.
- 4.33. Report:** A written communication (possibly including digital images) of any **material defects** seen during the inspection.
- 4.34. Representative Number:** A sufficient number to serve as a typical or characteristic example of the item(s) **inspected**.
- 4.35. Safety Glazing:** Tempered glass, laminated glass, or rigid plastic.
- 4.36. Shut Down:** Turned off, unplugged, inactive, not in service, not operational, etc.



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**4.37. Structural Component:** A **component** which supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

**4.38. System:** An assembly of various **components** to **function** as a whole.

**4.39. Technically Exhaustive:** A comprehensive and detailed examination beyond the scope of a real estate **home inspection** which would involve or include, but would not be limited to: dismantling, specialized knowledge or training, special equipment, measurements, calculations, testing, research, analysis or other means.

**4.40. Unsafe:** A **condition** in a **readily accessible, installed system** or **component** which is judged to be a significant risk of personal injury during normal, day-to-day use. The risk may be due to damage, deterioration, improper installation or a change in accepted residential construction standards.

**4.41. Verify:** To confirm or substantiate.