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STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

RESIDENTIAL STANDARDS – FOUR OR FEWER UNITS

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I. Definitions and Scope

- A. A Real Estate Inspection is a non-invasive physical *examination*, performed for a fee, designed to identify *material defects* in the *systems, structures, and components* of a *building* as they exist at the time of the *inspection*. The specific *systems, structures, and components* of a *building* to be *examined* are listed in these Standards of Practice.
- B. A Material Defect is a *condition* that significantly affects the value, desirability, habitability, or safety of the *building*. Style or aesthetics shall not be considered in determining whether a specific *system, structure, or component* is defective.
- C. These Standards provide *inspection* guidelines, make public the services provided by private fee-paid *inspectors*, and define certain terms relating to these *inspections*.
- D. Sections 1 through 10 of these Standards are a mandatory part of all such *inspections*. Sections 11 through 13 are optional.
- E. Unless otherwise agreed between the *inspector* and client, these Standards shall apply to the *primary building* and its associated *primary parking structure*. The *inspection* shall be limited to those specific *systems, structures, and components* that are present and visually *accessible*. *Components* and *systems* shall be *operated* with *normal user controls* only and as *conditions* permit. *Inspections* performed in accordance with these Standards are not intended to be *technically exhaustive*.
- F. *Inspection reports* shall describe and identify in written format the *inspected systems, structures, and components* of the *building* and shall identify *material defects*.
- G. *Inspection reports* may contain recommendations regarding *conditions* reported or recommendations for *further evaluation* by *appropriate persons*.

II. Standards of Practice

SECTION 1 – Foundations, Basements, and Under-floor Areas

- A. Items to be identified and reported:
 - 1. Foundation and other support *components*.
 - 2. Under-floor ventilation.
 - 3. Location of opening(s) entered to each *accessible* under-floor area.
 - 4. Wood separation from soil.
 - 5. Presence of drainage *systems* or sump pumps within foundation footprint.
 - 6. Presence or absence of seismic anchoring and bracing *components*.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Enter* under-floor areas that are not *accessible* or where entry could cause damage or pose a hazard to the *inspector*.
2. Move stored items, vegetation, or debris, or perform any excavations or other *intrusive* testing to gain access.
3. *Operate* or *evaluate* adequacy of sump pumps or drainage *systems*.
4. Identify size, spacing, location or adequacy of foundation bolting and bracing *components* or reinforcement *systems*.
5. Perform any *intrusive examination* or testing, or use any *special equipment*, such as, but not limited to, levels, probes, or meters.

SECTION 2 – Exteriors

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Surface grade, hardscaping, and drainage within six feet of the *inspected building* or associated *primary parking structure*.
2. Wall cladding, veneers, flashing, trim, eaves, soffits, and fascias.
3. Exterior portions of a *representative sampling* of doors and windows.
4. Attached decks, porches, balconies, stairs, columns, walkways, guard-rails, and handrails.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Operate* or *evaluate* any mechanical, electro-mechanical, or underground drainage *systems*.
2. *Operate* or *evaluate* storm windows, storm doors, screening, shutters, or awnings.
3. *Operate* or *evaluate* remote-control devices.
4. *Examine* detached buildings and structures (other than the *primary parking structure*), patio enclosures, fences, and retaining walls.
5. *Examine* items not visible from a readily *accessible* walking surface.

SECTION 3 – Roof Coverings

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Roof coverings.
2. Flashing, vents, skylights, and other penetrations.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. Walk on the roof surface if, in the opinion of the *inspector*, there is a possibility of damage to the surface or a hazard to the *inspector*.
2. Perform a water test, warrant or certify against roof leakage, or predict life expectancy.

SECTION 4 – Attic Areas and Roof Framing

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Framing and sheathing.
2. Access opening(s) and *accessibility*.
3. Insulation material(s).
4. Ventilation.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Enter* attic areas that, in the opinion of the *inspector*, are not *accessible* or where entry could cause damage.
2. Remove insulation materials or identify composition or "R" value of insulation material.
3. Activate thermostatically operated fans.

SECTION 5 – Plumbing Systems

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Supply, waste, and vent piping.
2. Fixtures, faucets, and drains.
3. Water heating equipment, including combustion air, venting, connections, energy sources, seismic bracing, and temperature-pressure relief valves.
4. *Functional flow* of water supply and *functional drainage* at fixtures.
5. Gas piping and connectors.
6. *Cross-connections*.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Operate* any valve other than fixture faucets and hose faucets attached to the *building*.
2. *Operate* any *system, fixture, or component* which is *shut down* or *disconnected*.
3. *Examine* or verify operation of water supply or pressure assistance *systems*, including, but not limited to, wells, pumps, tanks, and related equipment.
4. Verify *functional flow* or pressure at any *fixture* or faucet where the flow end is capped or connected to an *appliance*, or measure pressure, volume, or temperature.
5. *Examine* or *operate* any sewage disposal *system* or *component*, including, but not limited to, septic tanks and/or any underground *system* or portion thereof, or ejector pumps for rain or waste.
6. *Examine* the overflow device of any fixture.
7. *Evaluate* the potability of water, compliance with local or state conservation or energy standards, or proper design or sizing of any water, waste, and venting *components, fixtures, or piping*.

8. Identify whether water supply and waste disposal *systems* are public or private.
9. *Evaluate* time to obtain hot water at fixtures, or perform testing of any kind to water heater elements.
10. *Examine* ancillary *systems* or *components*, such as, but not limited to, those relating to solar water heating, hot water circulation, yard sprinklers, water conditioning, swimming pools or spas and related equipment, and fire sprinklers.
11. Test shower pans for leakage or fill any fixture with water during *examination*.
12. *Evaluate* the gas supply *system* for leaks or pressure.
13. *Determine* effectiveness of anti-siphon, back-flow prevention, or drain-stop *devices*.
14. *Determine* whether there are sufficient clean-outs for effective clearing of drains.
15. *Evaluate* gas, liquid propane, or oil storage tanks.

SECTION 6 – Electrical Systems

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Service conductors, equipment, and capacity.
2. Panels and overcurrent protection devices.
3. Service and equipment grounding.
4. Wiring types and methods.
5. A *representative sampling* of switches, receptacles, and light fixtures.
6. Ground-fault circuit-interrupters.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Operate* electrical *systems* or *components* which are *disconnected* or *shut down*.
2. Disconnect any energized *system* or *appliance*.
3. Remove deadfront covers where not *accessible* or if removal could cause injury or damage to persons or property, or remove *device* cover plates.
4. *Operate* overcurrent protection devices, or *evaluate* compatibility of overcurrent protection devices with the panelboard manufacturer.
5. *Examine* or test smoke detectors.
6. *Operate* ground-fault circuit-interrupter devices by other than the manufacturer's test button.
7. *Examine* de-icing equipment, or private or emergency electrical supply sources, including, but not limited to, generators, windmills, photovoltaic solar collectors, or battery or electrical storage facilities.

SECTION 7 – Heating Systems

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Heating equipment and operation using *normal user controls*.
2. Venting *systems*.
3. Combustion and ventilating air.
4. Energy source and connections.

5. Heating distribution *system(s)* including a *representative sampling* of ducting, duct insulation, outlets, radiators, piping *systems*, and valves.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Examine or evaluate condition* of heat exchangers.
2. *Determine* uniformity, temperature, airflow, or balance of heat supply to any room or *building*, or *examine* for warming at any heating *system* distribution *component* when *access* would require steps or a ladder, or *determine* leakage in any ductwork.
3. *Examine* electric heater elements or heat pump fluid/gas materials, or *examine* below ground/slab *systems*, ducts, fuel tanks, and related *components*.
4. *Determine* or *examine* thermostat calibration, heat anticipation, or automatic setbacks or clocks.
5. *Examine* radiant or geothermal heat pump *systems*.
6. *Examine* any solar-energy heating *systems* or *components*.
7. *Examine* electronic air filtering *systems*.
8. *Operate* heat pump *systems* when the ambient air temperature may damage the equipment, or *operate* any heat pump *system* in "emergency" heat mode.
9. *Examine* humidity control *systems* and *components*.

SECTION 8 – Central Cooling Systems

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Cooling equipment and operation using *normal user controls*.
2. Cooling distribution *system(s)* including a *representative sampling* of ducting, duct insulation, outlets, piping *systems*, and valves.
3. Energy source and connections.
4. Condensate drains.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Determine* uniformity, temperature, airflow, or balance of cool air supply to any room or *building*, or *examine* for cooling at any cooling *system* distribution *component* when *access* would require steps or a ladder, or *determine* leakage in any ductwork.
2. *Examine* electrical current, coolant fluids or gases, or coolant leakage.
3. *Examine* electronic filtering *systems*.
4. *Determine* or *examine* thermostat calibration, cooling anticipation, or automatic setbacks or clocks.
5. *Examine* any non-central cooling unit(s) or gas-fired, solar, or geothermal cooling *system* or food, wine, or similar storage cooling *system*.
6. *Examine* humidity control *systems* and *components*.

SECTION 9 – Fireplaces and Chimneys

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Chimneys, flues, dampers, and associated *components*.
2. Fireboxes, hearth extensions, and *permanently installed accessory components*.
3. Manufactured solid-fuel or gas-burning *appliances*.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Determine* adequacy of draft, perform a smoke test, or *dismantle* or remove any *component*.
2. *Examine* the structural integrity of fireplaces and chimneys.
3. *Examine* or *operate* ancillary or non-*permanently installed components*.

SECTION 10 – Building Interior

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Walls, ceilings, and floors.
2. Security bars, ventilation *components*, and a *representative sampling* of doors and windows.
3. Stairs, handrails, and guardrails.
4. *Permanently installed* cabinet and countertop surfaces.
5. Safety glazing in locations subject to human impact.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Operate* or *evaluate* security bar release and opening mechanisms, whether interior or exterior, including compliance with local, state, or federal standards.
2. *Determine* whether a *building* is secure from forcible or unauthorized entry.
3. *Evaluate* the *condition* of floor, wall, or ceiling finishes or coverings, or other surfaces for other than *evidence* of moisture damage.
4. *Examine* window or door coverings or treatments.
5. *Evaluate* fastening of countertops, furniture, or cabinets supported by floors, ceilings, and/or walls.
6. *Evaluate* separation walls, ceilings, and floors, including, but not limited to, the fire-resistivity or acoustical characteristics, between dwelling units.
7. *Examine* the interior concrete slab-on-grade when concealed by any floor coverings.
8. *Operate* or *evaluate* safety features of any garage door opener unless included as an inspection option per Section 11.

SECTION 11 (OPTIONAL) – Other Built-In Appliances and Systems

The *inspector* may *examine* any of the following at his/her discretion, as agreed with client:

Attic power vents, central vacuum, cook-tops and exhaust fans, dishwashers, food waste disposers, garage door openers, hydrotherapy tubs, ovens, microwave ovens, refrigerators, freezers, trash compactors, or whole-house fans.

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Optional *systems, components, and appliances* specifically *examined* during the *inspection*.
2. *Basic operation* of optional *systems, components, and appliances* specifically included in the *inspection*.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. Activate any *system or appliance* that is *shut down*.
2. *Operate or evaluate* any *system, component, or appliance* that does not respond to *normal user controls*.
3. *Operate* any gas *appliance* that requires the use of a match or other remote burner lighting device.
4. *Operate* any *system or appliance* that requires the use of special codes, keys, combinations, or devices.
5. *Operate any system, component, or appliance* where damage may occur.
6. *Determine* thermostat(s) calibration, adequacy of heating elements, *operate or evaluate* self-cleaning oven cycles, signal lights, or automatic setbacks or clocks.
7. *Determine* leakage from microwave ovens.
8. *Determine* the presence or *operation* of backdraft damper devices in exhaust devices.
9. *Examine* any sauna, steam-jenny, kiln, clothes washing or drying machine, toaster, icemaker, coffeemaker, can opener, bread warmer, blender, instant hot water dispenser, or any other similar small, ancillary, or non-*built-in appliances*.

SECTION 12 (OPTIONAL) – Pools and Spas

The *inspector* may *examine* the following at his/her discretion, as agreed with client:

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Location and type of pool or spa *examined*.
2. *Conditions* limiting or otherwise inhibiting *inspection*.
3. Enclosure and related gates.
4. Hardscaping and drainage related to the *inspected* pool or spa.
5. *Condition* of visible portions of *systems, structures, or components*.
6. Normally necessary and present equipment such as lights, pumps, heaters, filters, and related mechanical and electrical connections.

B. The *inspector* is not required to:

1. *Examine* any above-ground, movable, freestanding, or otherwise non-permanently installed pool or spa, or self-contained equipment.
2. Come into contact with pool or spa water to *examine* the *system, structure, or components*.
3. *Determine* adequacy of spa jet water force or bubble effect.
4. *Determine* structural integrity or leakage of any kind.
5. *Evaluate* thermostat(s) or their calibration, heating elements, chemical dispensers, water chemistry or conditioning devices, low voltage or computer controls, timers, sweeps or cleaners, pool or spa covers, and related *components*.
6. *Operate* or *evaluate* filter backwash *systems*.
7. *Examine* accessories, such as, but not limited to, aerators or air-blowers, diving or jump boards, ladders, skimmers, slides, or steps.

SECTION 13 (OPTIONAL) – Manufactured Homes

The *inspector* may *examine* the following at his/her discretion, as agreed with the client:

A. Items to be identified and reported:

1. Where applicable the *inspection* shall be performed in accordance with the Standards of Practice of the California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA). The *inspector* shall use US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and Calif. State Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) regulations to *determine* if a *system or component* has a *material defect*.

III. LIMITATIONS, EXCEPTIONS, AND EXCLUSIONS

*Note: All limitations, exceptions, and exclusions apply equally to mandatory and optional sections.

- A. The *inspector* may exclude from the *inspection* any *system, structure, or component* of the *building* which is *inaccessible*, concealed from view, or cannot be *inspected* due to circumstances beyond the control of the *inspector*, or which the client has agreed is not to be *inspected*. If an *inspector* excludes any specific *system, structure, or component* of the *building* from the *inspection*, the *inspector* shall confirm in the *report* such specific *system, structure, or component* of the *building* not *inspected* and the reason(s) for such exclusion(s).
- B. The *inspector* may limit the *inspection* to individual specific *systems, structures, or components* of the *building*. In such event, the *inspector* shall confirm in the *report* that the *inspection* has been limited to such individual specific *systems, structures, and components* of the *building*.

- C. The following are excluded from the scope of a *real estate inspection* unless specifically agreed otherwise between the *inspector* and the client:
1. *Systems, structures, or components* not specifically identified in these Standards.
 2. Environmental hazards or conditions, including, but not limited to, toxic, reactive, combustible, corrosive contaminants, wildfire, geologic, or flood.
 3. *Examination of conditions* related to animals, rodents, insects, wood-destroying insects, organisms, mold, and mildew.
 4. Geotechnical, engineering, structural, architectural, geological, hydrological, land surveying, or soils-related *examinations*.
 5. Certain factors relating to any *systems, structures, or components* of the *building*, including, but not limited to, adequacy, efficiency, durability or remaining useful life, costs to repair, replace or operate, fair market value, marketability, quality, or advisability of purchase.
 6. *Systems, structures, or components*, of the *building* which are not *permanently installed*.
 7. *Determination* of compliance with installation guidelines, manufacturers' specifications, building codes, ordinances, regulations, covenants, or other restrictions, including local interpretations thereof.
 8. Common areas, or *systems, structures, or components* thereof, including, but not limited to, those of a common interest development as defined in California Civil Code Section 1351 et seq.
- D. The *inspector* is not required to perform any of the following as part of a *real estate inspection*:
1. Move any personal items or other obstruction(s), such as, but not limited to, furniture, floor or wall coverings, window coverings, snow, ice, water, debris, and foliage which may obstruct visibility or access.
 2. *Determine* causes for the need of repair or replacement, or specify repair or replacement procedures or materials.
 3. *Determine* existence of latent deficiencies or defects.
 4. *Dismantle* any *system, structure, or component*, or perform any *intrusive or destructive examination, test, or analysis*.
 5. Obtain or review information from any third-parties, including, but not limited to, government agencies (such as permits), *component* or *system* manufacturers (including product defects, recalls, or similar notices), contractors, managers, sellers, occupants, neighbors, consultants, homeowner or similar associations, attorneys, agents, or brokers.
 6. Activate or *operate* any *system or component* that is *shut down* or does not respond to *normal user controls*, nor *access* any area or *operate* any *component* or *system* which may jeopardize the safety of the *inspector*, or any other person or thing.
 7. Research the history of a property, *report* on its potential for alteration, modification, extendibility, or its suitability for a specific or proposed use or occupancy.
 8. Offer any form of guarantee or warranty.

9. *Examine or evaluate* the acoustical or other nuisance characteristics of any *system, structure, or component* of a *building*, complex, adjoining properties, or neighborhood.
10. *Operate or evaluate* any recreational *system, structure, or component*.
11. *Operate or evaluate* low voltage electrical (less than single-phase line voltage, typically 120-volts) *antennas, security systems, cable or satellite television, telephone, remote controls, radio controls, timers, intercoms, computers, photo-electric, motion sensing, or other such similar non-primary electrical power devices, components, or systems*.
12. Use any *special equipment* to *examine* any *system, structure, or component* of a *building*.
13. Probe or exert pressure on any *component, system, or structure*.
14. *Examine or evaluate* fire-resistive qualities of any *system, structure, or component* of the *building*.
15. *Examine* every individual *component* of a *system or structure*, where such *components* are typically replicated, including, but not limited to, doors, windows, switches, and receptacles. A *representative sampling* may be performed in order to *examine* such *systems, structures, or components* of a *building*.
16. *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.

III. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Note: All definitions apply to derivatives of these terms when italicized in the text.

Accessible: Can be approached or entered by the *inspector* safely without difficulty or damage to the *system, structure, or component*.

Appliance: See "*Component*."

Appropriate Persons: An individual other than *inspector* herein, qualified by virtue of special knowledge, training or resources to further *examine* a *system, structure, or component*, as in the manner of a specialist.

Basic Operation: The fundamental *function* of a *component or appliance* (e.g., the bake and broil elements of an oven), but not those ancillary to its use (e.g., an oven self-cleaning cycle or timer, thermostat or clock).

Building: The *primary building* subject of the *inspection*, designed and erected for the purpose of human occupancy or use (e.g. dwelling).

Built-in: See "*Permanently installed*."

Component: A *permanently installed appliance, fixture, element, or part* of a *system*.

Condition: The plainly visible and conspicuous state of being of a material object or thing.

Cross-connection: A connection between two otherwise separate systems, one of which is potable water and the other waste, sewage or other source of contamination.

Destructive: To demolish, damage, or probe any *system, structure, or component*, or to *dismantle* any *system or component* that would not be taken apart by an ordinary person in the course of normal maintenance.

Determine: To arrive at an opinion or conclusion pursuant to *examination*.

Disconnected: See “*Shut down.*”

Dismantle: See “*Destructive.*”

Enter: See “*Accessible.*”

Evaluate: To assess the *systems, structures, or components* of a *building*.

Evidence: Plainly visible and conspicuous material objects or other things presented to the senses that would tend to produce conviction in the mind of an ordinary person as to the existence or non-existence of a fact.

Examine: To visually look for and identify *material defects* in *systems, structures, or components* of a *building* through a non-invasive, physical *inspection*.

Fixture: See “*Component.*”

Function: Performing its normal, proper and characteristic action.

Functional Drainage: The emptying of a plumbing fixture in a reasonable amount of time, without overflow when another fixture is drained simultaneously.

Functional Flow: A reasonable flow of water supply at the highest and farthest fixture from the *building* main when another fixture is *operated* simultaneously.

Further Evaluation: A degree of *examination* beyond that of a typical and customary non-invasive physical *examination*.

Inspection: The act of performing a *real estate inspection*.

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

Intrusive: See “*Destructive.*”

Malfunction: Failure to perform its normal, proper and characteristic action.

Material Defect: (Refer to Section I, “Definitions and Scope” Paragraph B).

Normal User Controls: Devices that would be *operated* by the ordinary occupants of a *building*, requiring no specialized skill or knowledge.

Operate: To cause *systems* or equipment to *function* with *normal user controls*.

Operational: *Systems* or *components* capable of being safely *operated*.

Permanently Installed: Fixed in place (e.g. screwed, bolted, or nailed), as distinct from *components*, *systems*, or *appliances* considered portable or freestanding.

Primary Building: A *building* that an *inspector* has agreed to *inspect*, excluding all accessory buildings with the exception of the *primary parking structure*.

Primary Parking Structure: A *building* for the purpose of vehicle storage associated with the *primary building*.

Real Estate Inspection: (Refer to Section I, "Definitions and Scope" Paragraph A).

Report: The *inspection report* is a written document prepared for a fee and issued after a *real estate inspection* identifying and describing the *inspected systems*, *structures*, and *components* of the *building* and identifying *material defects* discovered therein.

Representative Sampling: A small quantity of *components* of any *system* or *structure* enough like others in its class or kind to serve as an example of its class or kind.

Shut Down: Turned off, inactive, not in-service, non-*operational*.

Special Equipment: Any tools or devices other than those normally used by an *inspector* to perform a typical and customary non-invasive physical *examination* of the *systems*, *structures*, and *components* of a *building*, including, but not limited to, levels, probes, meters, video or audio devices and measuring devices.

Structure: An assemblage of various *systems* and *components* to *function* as a whole.

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

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