Chapter 308-408C WAC
STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

WAC 308-408C-010 Standards of practice (SOP)—Purpose and scope. Violations of the following SOP and ethics are subject to disciplinary action under RCW 18.235. -130.

The purpose of a home inspection is to assess the condition of the residence at the time of the inspection using visual observations, simple tools and normal homeowner operational controls; and to report deficiencies of specific systems and components. Inspectors must perform all inspections in compliance with the SOP set forth by the Washington state department of licensing.

A home inspection is not technically exhaustive and does not identify concealed conditions or latent defects. This SOP is applicable to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their attached garages or carports.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-010, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

WAC 308-408C-020 Ethics—Statement of purpose. In order to ensure the integrity and high standard of skill and practice in the home inspection profession, the following rules of conduct and ethics shall be binding upon the inspector.

The home inspector must:

(1) Provide home inspection services that conform to the Washington state home inspectors' SOP.

(2) Provide full written disclosure of any business or familial relationships or other conflicts of interest between themselves and any other party to the transaction. The parties may include, but are not limited to, buyers, sellers, appraisers, real estate licensees, mortgage representatives, title companies, vendors and service contractors.

(3) Act as an unbiased party and discharge his or her duties with integrity and fidelity to the client.

(4) Perform services and express opinions based on genuine conviction and only within the inspector's area of education, training, or expertise.

(5) Not conduct a home inspection or prepare a home inspection report that knowingly minimizes, compromises or attempts to balance information about defects for the purpose of garnering future referrals.

(6) Not provide services that constitute the unauthorized practice of any profession that requires a special license when the inspector does not hold that license.

(7) Not accept compensation for a home inspection from more than one party without written disclosure to the inspector's client(s).

(8) Not for one year after completion of the inspection repair, replace, or upgrade for compensation components or systems on any building inspected - this section applies to the inspector's firm and other employees or principals of that firm or affiliated firms.

(9) Not provide compensation, inducement, or reward directly or indirectly, to any person or entity other than the client, for the referral of business, inclusion on a list of recommended inspectors or preferred providers or participate in similar arrangements. The purchase and/or use of low-value advertising or marketing services or products that does not exceed ten dollars per item, is not considered inducement or reward.

(10) Not disclose information contained in the inspection report without client approval or as required by law. However, at their discretion inspectors may disclose when practical observed safety or health hazards to occupants or others that are exposed to such hazards.

(11) Not advertise previous experience in an associated trade as experience in the home inspection profession. An inspector's advertised inspection experience will reflect only the inspector's experience as a home inspector and inspectors shall not advertise, market or promote their home inspection services or qualifications in a fraudulent, false, deceptive or misleading manner.

(12) Not accept a home inspection referral or perform a home inspection when assignment of the inspection is contingent upon the inspector reporting predetermined conditions.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-020, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

WAC 308-408C-030 Exclusions and limitations. Inspectors are not required to:

(1) Determine the condition of any system or component that is not readily accessible; the remaining service life of any system or component; the strength, adequacy, effectiveness or efficiency of any system or component; causes of any condition or deficiency; methods, materials, or cost of corrections; future conditions including, but not limited to, failure of systems and components.

(2) Comment on the suitability of the structure or property for any specialized use, compliance with codes, regulations, laws or ordinances.
WAC 308-408C-040 Recordkeeping. The inspector is required to maintain the following records for a period of three years:

1. Preinspection agreements signed by the client and the home inspector for all home inspections.
2. Home inspection reports.
3. Timesheets or similar documentation used to establish proof of field training, when supervising a home inspector applicant/candidate.

WAC 308-408C-050 Contracts. A preinspection agreement is mandatory and as a minimum must contain or state:

1. Address of property.
2. Home inspector compensation.
3. General description of what the home inspector will and will not inspect. That description will include all items that the Washington state SOP requires to be inspected.
4. A statement that the inspection does not include investigation of mold, asbestos, lead paint, water, soil, air quality or other environmental issues unless agreed to in writing in the preinspection agreement.

WAC 308-408C-060 Procedures. A home inspector must:

1. Provide a copy of the preinspection agreement to the client prior to the inspection unless prevented by circumstances from doing so.
2. Provide the client a copy of the home inspection report according to the terms of the preinspection agreement.
3. Return client's money related to a home inspection report when ordered to do so by a court.

WAC 308-408C-070 Structure. An inspection of the structure will include the visible foundation; floor framing; roof framing and decking; other support and substructure/superstructure components; stairs; ventilation (when applicable); and exposed concrete slabs in garages and habitable areas.

1. The inspector will:
   - Describe the type of building materials comprising the major structural components.
   - Enter and traverse attics and subfloor crawlspaces.
   - Inspect
     a. The condition and serviceability of visible, exposed foundations and grade slabs, walls, posts, piers, beams, joists, trusses, subfloors, chimney foundations, stairs and the visible roof structure and attic components where readily and safely accessible.
     b. Subfloor crawlspaces and basements for indications of flooding and moisture penetration.
   - Probe a representative number of structural components where deterioration is suspected or where clear indications of possible deterioration exist. Probing is not required
when probing will damage any finished surface or where no deterioration is suspected.

- Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.
- Report all wood rot and pest-conducive conditions discovered.
- Refer all issues that are suspected to be insect related to a licensed structural pest inspector (SPI) or pest control operator (PCO) for follow up.

(2) The inspector is not required to:
- Enter
  (a) Subfloor crawlspaces that require excavation or have an access opening less than eighteen inches by twenty-four inches or headroom less than eighteen inches beneath floor joists and twelve inches beneath girders (beams).
  (b) Any areas that are not readily accessible due to obstructions, inadequate clearances or have conditions which, in the inspector's opinion, are hazardous to the health and safety of the inspector or will cause damage to components of the home.
- Move stored items or debris or perform excavation to gain access.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-070, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

WAC 308-408C-080 Exterior. An inspection of the exterior includes the visible wall coverings, trim, protective coatings and sealants, windows and doors, attached porches, decks, steps, balconies, handrails, guardrails, carports, eaves, soffits, fascias and visible exterior portions of chimneys.

(1) The inspector will:
- Describe the exterior components visible from ground level.
- Inspect visible wall coverings, trim, protective coatings and sealants, windows and doors, attached porches, decks, steps, balconies, handrails, guardrails, carports, eaves, soffits, fascias and visible exterior portions of chimneys.
- Probe exterior components where deterioration is suspected or where clear indications of possible deterioration exist. Probing is not required when probing will damage any finished surface or where no deterioration is suspected.
- Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.

(2) The inspector is not required to:
- Inspect
  (a) Buildings, decks, patios, fences, retaining walls, and other structures detached from the dwelling.
  (b) Safety type glass or the integrity of thermal window seals.
  (c) Flues or verify the presence of flue liners beyond what can be safely and readily seen from the roof or the firebox of a stove or fireplace.
- Test or evaluate the operation of security locks, devices or systems.
- Enter areas beneath decks with less than five feet of clearance from the underside of joists to grade.
- Evaluate the function or condition of shutters, awnings, storm doors, storm windows, screens, and similar accessories.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-080, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

WAC 308-408C-090 Roofs. An inspection of the roof includes the roof covering materials; gutters and downspout systems; visible flashings; roof vents; skylights, and any other roof penetrations; and the portions of the chimneys and flues visible from the exterior.

(1) The inspector will:
- Traverse the roof to inspect it.
- Inspect the gutters and downspout systems, visible flashings, soffits and fascias, skylights, and other roof penetrations.
- Report the manner in which the roof is ventilated.
- Describe the type and general condition of roof coverings.
- Report multiple layers of roofing when visible or readily apparent.
- Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.

(2) The inspector is not required to:
- Traverse a roof where, in the opinion of the inspector, doing so can damage roofing materials or be unsafe. If the roof is not traversed, the method used to inspect the roof must be reported.
- Remove snow, ice, debris or other material that obscures the roof surface or prevents access to the roof.
- Inspect gutter and downspout systems concealed within the structure; related underground drainage piping; and/or antennas, lightning arresters, or similar attachments.
- Operate powered roof ventilators.
- Predict remaining life expectancy of roof coverings.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-090, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

WAC 308-408C-100 Plumbing system. An inspection of the plumbing system includes visible water supply lines; visible waste/soil and vent lines; fixtures and faucets; domestic hot water system and fuel source.

(1) The inspector will:
(a) Describe the visible water supply and distribution piping materials; drain, waste and vent materials; water-heating equipment.
  (b) Report
    (i) The presence and functionality of sump pumps/waste ejector pumps when visible or confirm the float switch activates the pump when the sump is dry.
    (ii) The presence and location of a main water shutoff valve and/or fuel shutoff valve(s), or report that they were not found.
    (iii) The presence of the temperature and pressure relief (TPR) valve and associated piping.
    (iv) Whether or not the water temperature was tested and state that the generally accepted safe water temperature is one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit.
    (c) Inspect the condition of accessible and visible water supply pipes, drain/waste plumbing and the domestic hot water system when possible.
  (d) Operate fixtures in order to observe functional flow.
  (e) Check for functional drainage from fixtures.
  (f) Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components in the inspection report.

(2) The inspector is not required to:
(a) **Operate** any valves, including faucets of freestanding or built-in appliances or fixtures, if the outlet end of the valve or faucet is connected or intended to be connected to an appliance.

(b) **Inspect**

(i) Any system that is shut down or winterized.
(ii) Any plumbing components not readily accessible.
(iii) Floor drains and exterior drain systems, including but not limited to, exterior stairwell drains and driveway drains.
(iv) Fire sprinkler systems.
(v) Water-conditioning equipment, including softeners and filter systems.
(vi) Private water supply systems.
(vii) Gas supply systems.
(viii) Interior components of exterior pumps or sealed sanitary waste lift systems.

(ix) Ancillary systems or components such as, but not limited to, those related to solar water heating and hot water circulation.

(c) **Test**

(i) Pressure or temperature/pressure relief valve.
(ii) Shower pans for leaks or use special equipment to test/scan shower or tub surrounds for moisture in surrounding substrate materials.

(d) **Determine**

(i) The potability of any water supply whether public or private.
(ii) The condition and operation of water wells and related pressure tanks and pumps.
(iii) The quantity of water from on-site water supplies.
(iv) The quality or the condition and operation of on-site sewage disposal systems such as waste ejector pumps, cesspools, septic tanks, drain fields, related underground piping, conduit, cisterns, and related equipment.

(e) **Ignite** pilot lights.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-110, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

**WAC 308-408C-110 Electrical system.** The inspection of the electrical system includes the service drop through the main panel; subpanels including feeders; branch circuits, connected devices, and lighting fixtures.

1. **The inspector will:**

   (a) **Describe** in the report the type of primary service, whether overhead or underground, voltage, amperage, over-current protection devices (fuses or breakers) and the type of branch wiring used.

   (b) **Report**

      (i) The existence of a connected service-grounding conductor and service-grounding electrode when same can be determined.
      (ii) When no connection to a service grounding electrode can be confirmed.

   (c) **Inspect** the main and branch circuit conductors for proper over-current protection and condition by visual observation after removal of the readily accessible main and sub-electric panel cover(s).

   (d) **Report**, if present, solid conductor aluminum branch circuits. Include a statement in the report that solid conductor aluminum wiring may be hazardous and a licensed electrician should inspect the system to ensure it's safe.

   (e) **Verify**

      (i) The operation of a representative number of accessible switches, receptacles and light fixtures.
      (ii) The grounding and polarity of a representative number of receptacles; particularly in close proximity to plumbing fixtures or at the exterior.
      (iii) Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection and arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) protection where required.

   (f) **Report** the location of any inoperative or missing GFCI and/or AFCI devices when they are recommended by industry standards.

   (g) **Advise** clients that homes without ground fault protection should have GFCI devices installed where recommended by industry standards.

   (h) **Report** on any circuit breaker panel or subpanel known within the home inspection profession to have safety concerns.

   (i) **Describe** any deficiencies of these systems or components.

2. **The inspector is not required to:**

   (a) **Insert** any tool, probe or testing device into the main or subpanels.

   (b) **Activate** electrical systems or branch circuits that are not energized.

   (c) **Operate** circuit breakers, service disconnects or remove fuses.

   (d) **Inspect** ancillary systems, including but not limited to:

      (i) Timers.
      (ii) Security systems.
      (iii) Low voltage relays.
      (iv) Smoke/heat detectors.
      (v) Antennas.
      (vi) Intercoms.
      (vii) Electrical deicing tapes.
      (viii) Lawn sprinkler wiring.
      (ix) Swimming pool or spa wiring.
      (x) Central vacuum systems.
      (xi) Electrical equipment that's not readily accessible.

   (e) **Dismantle** any electrical device or control, except for the removal of the deadfront covers from the main service panel and subpanels.

   (f) **Move** any objects, furniture, or appliances to gain access to any electrical component.

   (g) **Test** every switch, receptacle, and fixture.

   (h) **Remove** switch and receptacle cover plates.

   (i) **Verify** the continuity of connected service ground(s).

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-110, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

**WAC 308-408C-120 Heating system.** The inspection of the heating system includes the fuel source; heating equipment; heating distribution; operating controls; flue pipes, chimneys and venting; auxiliary heating units.

1. **The inspector will:**

   (a) **Describe** the type of fuel, heating equipment, and heating distribution systems.
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(b) Operate the system using normal control devices and measure and record temperature differential.
(c) Open readily accessible access panels or covers provided by the manufacturer or installer.
(d) Inspect the condition of controls and operational components of the complete system; conditions permitting.
(e) Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components in the inspection report.

(2) The inspector is not required to:
(a) Activate cooling systems that have been shut down.
(b) Inspect gas-fired refrigeration systems.
(c) Evaporative coolers.
(d) Inspect the walls or window-mounted air-conditioning units.
(e) Inspect the system for refrigerant leaks.
(f) Check the coolant pressure/charge.
(g) Determine the efficiency, or adequacy of the system.
(h) Operate cooling system components if the exterior temperature is below sixty degrees Fahrenheit or when other circumstances are not conducive to safe operation or when doing so might damage the equipment.

(f) Remove covers or panels that are not readily accessible.
(g) Dismantle any equipment, controls, or gauges except readily identifiable access covers designed to be removed by users.
(h) Determine how much current the unit is drawing.
(i) Evaluate digital-type thermostats or controls.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-130, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]

WAC 308-408C-140 Interiors. The inspection of the interior includes the walls, ceilings, floors, windows, and doors; steps, stairways, balconies and railings.

(1) The inspector will:
(a) Verify that steps, handrails, guardrails, stairways and landings are installed wherever necessary and report when they are missing or in need of repair and report when baluster spacing exceeds four inches.
(b) Inspect the overall general condition of cabinets and countertops.
(c) Comment on the presence or absence of smoke detectors.
(d) Describe any noncosmetic deficiencies of these systems or components.

(2) The inspector is not required to:
(a) Report on cosmetic conditions related to the condition of interior components.
(b) Verify whether all walls, floors, ceilings, doorways, cabinets and window openings are square, straight, level or plumb.

(3/20/09)
WAC 308-408C-150 Insulation and ventilation. The inspection of the insulation and ventilation includes the type and condition of the insulation and ventilation in viewable unfinished attics and subgrade areas as well as the installed mechanical ventilation systems.

1) The inspector will:
   • Inspect the insulation, ventilation and installed mechanical systems in viewable and accessible attics and unfinished subfloor areas.
   • Describe the type of insulation in viewable and accessible unconditioned spaces.
   • Report missing or inadequate vapor barriers in subfloor crawlspaces with earth floors.
   • Report the absence of insulation at the interface between conditioned and unconditioned spaces where visible.
   • Report the absence of insulation on heating system ductwork and supply plumbing in unconditioned spaces.
   • Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.

2) The inspector is not required to:
   • Determine the presence, extent, and type of insulation and vapor barriers concealed in the exterior walls.
   • Determine the thickness or R-value of insulation above the ceiling, in the walls or below the floors.
   • Evaluate hydrological or geological conditions.
   • Determine the adequacy of bulkheads, seawalls, breakwalls, and docks.

WAC 308-408C-160 Fireplaces and stoves. Includes solid fuel and gas fireplaces, stoves, dampers, fireboxes and hearths.

1) The inspector will:
   • Describe fireplaces and stoves.
   • Inspect dampers, fireboxes and hearths.
   • Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.

2) The inspector is not required to:
   • Inspect flues and verify the presence of flue liners beyond what can be safely and readily seen from the roof or the firebox of a stove or fireplace.
   • Ignite fires in a fireplace or stove.
   • Determine the adequacy of draft.
   • Perform a chimney smoke test.
   • Inspect any solid fuel device being operated at the time of the inspection.
   • Evaluate the installation or adequacy of fireplace inserts.
   • Evaluate modifications to a fireplace, stove, or chimney.
   • Dismantle fireplaces or stoves to inspect fireboxes or remove rain caps to inspect chimney flues.

WAC 308-408C-170 Site. The inspection of the site includes the building perimeter, land grade, and water drainage directly adjacent to the foundation; trees and vegetation that adversely affect the structure; walks, grade steps, driveways, patios, and retaining walls contiguous with the structure.

1) The inspector will:
   (a) Describe the material used for driveways, walkways, patios and other flatwork around the home.
   (b) Inspect
      (i) For serviceability of the driveways, steps, walkways, patios, flatwork and retaining walls contiguous with the structure.
      (ii) For proper grading and drainage contiguous with the structure.
      (iii) Vegetation in close proximity to the home.
   (c) Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.

2) The inspector is not required to:
   • Inspect fences, privacy walls or retaining walls that are not contiguous with the structure.
   • Report the condition of soil, trees, shrubs or vegetation unless they adversely affect the structure.
   • Evaluate hydrological or geological conditions.
   • Determine the adequacy of bulkheads, seawalls, breakwalls, and docks.

WAC 308-408C-180 Attached garages or carports. The inspection of attached garages and carports includes their framing, siding, roof, doors, windows, and installed electrical/mechanical systems pertaining to the operation of the home.

1) The inspector will:
   • Inspect the condition and function of the overhead garage doors and associated hardware.
   • Test the function of the garage door openers, their auto-reverse systems and secondary entrapment devices (photoelectric and edge sensors) when present.
   • Inspect the condition and installation of any pedestrian doors.
   • Inspect fire separation between the house and garage when applicable.
   • Report as a fire hazard the presence of any ignition source (gas and electric water heaters, electrical receptacles, electronic air cleaners, motors of installed appliances, etc.) that is within eighteen inches of the garage floor.
   • Describe any deficiencies of these systems or components.

2) The inspector is not required to:
   • Determine whether or not a solid core pedestrian door that is not labeled is fire rated.
   • Verify the functionality of garage door opener remote controls.
   • Move vehicles or personal property.
   • Operate any equipment unless otherwise addressed in the SOP.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.280.050 and 18.280.060(6). WSR 09-08-014, § 308-408C-180, filed 3/20/09, effective 4/20/09.]