



**California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA) Press / Media Information**  
**Latest Press Release: CREIA Addresses Air Conditioning System Concerns**

*Courtesy of the California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA)*

April 2005 (Palm Springs, Calif) — As the warmer weather season approaches throughout California, homeowners and potential homebuyers are cautioned to make sure that their central cooling systems are functioning properly and safely.

A professional home inspector is governed by standards as to the inspecting of an air conditioner. The most widely used standards of practice in California, published by the California Real Estate Inspection Association ([www.CREIA.org](http://www.CREIA.org)) state the following with regard to the inspection of central cooling systems: The inspector shall identify and report on

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

There are a number of other exclusions listed in these standards some of which state that the inspector is NOT required to inspect electronic filtering systems or determine uniformity, temperature, airflow or balance of cool air supply to any room determine cooling supply adequacy or distribution balance. Please refer to CREIA's Standards of Practice, which you may download from CREIA's web site for a complete list of what is and what is not included in a normal property inspection.

Turning on the unit to see that the machinery is physically active complies with industry standards; competent inspectors will make a good faith attempt to determine functionality of an air conditioning system. Some employ technical equipment for measuring the temperature and/or volume of airflow at the vents. Others simply place a hand against the register to determine that airflow is reasonably cool. However, depending on when the inspection occurred — such as in a colder season — it may have been difficult to know whether any cool air was flowing. Other central cooling system concerns include defective controls, inoperative emergency switches, and evidence of past malfunctions.

A profession inspector will report on the presence or absence of an air conditioner electrical disconnect switch. Air conditioner systems need to have a disconnect switch that is visible and readily accessible. The switch may be located on the inside the fixture, as stated by the air conditioning contractor. However, most air conditioning contractors express strong disapproval of internal switches on air conditioners, regardless of the code as it could result in injury (or worse) to the workman during servicing or repairs. Internal switches are extremely rare and are regarded by home inspectors as a significant "red-flag" condition. Conditions cited by home inspectors may not always prove to be truly defective, but when electrical compliance is in doubt, a wise inspector will always err on the side of safety.

A very important aspect of air conditioning system maintenance is the air filter. Be aware that there is no established time requisite for the scheduling of air filter changes. Filters should be changed when they begin to become dusty, and this can happen sooner or later, depending on a number of variables. Check filters periodically to become familiar with the needs of a particular system. Routine maintenance is strongly recommended. Air filters that are sorely neglected may accumulate thick dust layers for periods of several years and reduce efficiency of the system and cause damage.

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*Since 1976, the California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA), a non-profit voluntary membership organization has been providing education, training, and support services to the real estate inspection industry and to the public. Inspectors must adhere to CREIA's Code of Ethics and follow the Standards of Practice developed by the association. These Standards of Practice have been recognized by the State of California, and are considered the source for home inspector Standard of Care by the real estate and legal communities.*