



SAVING HISTORIC PLACES

# MODULE 02

Preservation Toolkit

# Condition Assessment Checklist

This checklist was created to help you take a first step in assessing the physical condition of your historic building and better understand where restoration work is needed.<sup>1</sup> This knowledge will help expedite your communication with a preservation professional or seek out the right expert for the job. This checklist is not meant to replace a professional inspection from an architect, engineer, or contractor. Please see toolkit Module 6: Working with the Right Preservation Professionals, or visit the Oregon Heritage list of Preservation Contractors and Consultants at [www.oregon.gov/oprd/hcd/pages/publications.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/hcd/pages/publications.aspx) or Restore Oregon's Resource Directory at [www.RestoreOregon.org/resource-directory](http://www.RestoreOregon.org/resource-directory).

<sup>1</sup> This checklist was created with information taken from the Historical Building Assessment Checklist created by the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, the Checklist for Routine Inspection of Buildings created by the Kansas State Historical Society – Historic Preservation Department, the Maintenance Checklist used in the Historic Preservation Plan created by the Wichita/Sedgwick County Area Planning Department, and the Vermont Division For Historic Preservation Inspection Checklist for Historic Buildings. Information was also gathered from websites references within the document.

# Before Starting Your Assessment

Here is a list of tools you might need:

A flashlight, small magnet, plumb line, penknife, marble, pair of binoculars, pad and pencil, ladder, and the checklist.

## Roof

Estimated age, material, and general condition: \_\_\_\_\_

- Slate — Are there any missing, broken, or fallen pieces of slate? Are the metal roof valleys rusty?
- Standing Seam Metal — Is the roof material rusting?
- Corrugated Metal — Are there holes, loose, or missing fasteners? Are nails “popped-up,” loose, or sticking above the sheet metal?
- Wood or Asphalt shingles — Are shingles missing, curling, cupping, or losing mineral coating?
- Flat Asphalt or Membrane — Are there bubbles, blisters or cracks?



- Flat Asphalt or Membrane — Does water collect along the parapet (a low wall that hides the roofline), and is there debris in the roof drains?

- Flat — Asphalt or Membrane – Is the connection between the roof and parapet walls secure?
- Clay Tile – Are there broken or missing tiles? Are nails “popped-up,” loose, or sticking above the tile?
- Asphalt Shingles – Are mineral granules worn off or collecting in the gutters?
- Asphalt Shingles – Do the edges look worn? Are nails “popped-up,” loose, or sticking above shingles?
- Are there biological growth, mold, or nests?
- Is there a chimney? What material? Brick/Stucco/Concrete/Metal
- Do the chimneys or parapets have missing, cracked, or loose masonry or mortar?
- Are there holes from cables, antennas, or other equipment?
- Does the ridge of a pitched roof or any portion of a flat roof sag?

## Notes

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## Don't forget to check for:

- Proper flashing around projections
- Chimney leans
- Loose and wobbly antennae, lighting rods, and weather vanes
- Broken or missing cornice
- Damaged rafters or boards attached to the roof
- Clogged, sagging, or failing gutters

# Foundation

Materials and general condition: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Is there water collected near or at the building's foundation? This may indicate a drainage problem.
- Are there vertical or diagonal cracks in the concrete or masonry foundation? If so, you may have a settlement problem and need to consult a mason or structural engineer. Hairline and horizontal cracks usually do not represent a problem.
- Is the concrete or masonry flaking, crumbling, or deteriorating?
- Is there a visible lean or bulge?
- Is there any evidence of insect/termite activity or rot/decay to wood members?
- Does the ground drain towards the foundation, trapping water?
- Does the ground rise and cover a portion of the foundation?
- Are wood sills resting within 6" of the ground and are they rotting?



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## Don't forget to check for:

- Missing splash blocks at downspouts
- Soft and crumbling mortar

# Exterior Walls (including horizontal wood boards, wood shingle, and masonry)

Material(s) and general condition: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Is paint peeling, blistering, or cracking?
- Are there bulges in the wall, or significant changes in siding patterns, materials, and sizes?
- Are there water stains or white powdery deposits (efflorescence)?
- Is there any mold or mildew on the wall surface?
- Are there vertical or diagonal cracks?
- Are there soft spots, rotting, or signs of insect infestation?
- Is the masonry cracked, spalling, or crumbling?
- Is the mortar soft or crumbling?



## Notes

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## Don't forget to check for:

- Door alignment within door frame
- Loose and missing siding
- Decorative elements: materials and conditions

# Gutters & Downspouts

- Are gutters clogged? Does water overflow in areas of the gutters?
- Are there loose, rotted, or missing gutters or downspouts?
- Is there white deposits or stains on areas of walls or foundation?
- Are the downspouts working? or are they disconnected or have open seams, etc.



# Decks, Porches, and Balconies

- Are there loose or deteriorated structural or decorative components?
- Are there crumbling or loose pieces of masonry or concrete piers?
- Are exterior stairs and railings rotting or rusting leading to deterioration?
- Does water collect near the base of the exterior wall?



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## Don't forget to check for:

- Mold
- Wood rot and insect infestation
- Metal corrosion
- Uneven roof pitch

# Windows (check each window individually)

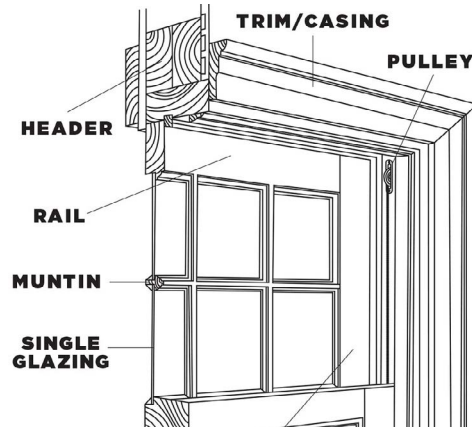
- Are they original?

What material are they? Wood/Metal/  
Vinyl/Other:

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- Double-paned?
- Storm windows?
- Do the sashes stick when operating?
- Is paint blistering, cracking, flaking, or peeling on window components (exterior and interior)?
- Is there evidence of excessive moisture penetration around the sash or at the sills on the interior?
- Is any wood at the exterior sill, frames, or sash saturated, decaying, and/or rotting?



- Is glazing putty around the panes of glass flaking or missing?
- Are sash cords broken or missing?
- Does condensation build on interior or exterior storm sashes during the winter months? Some condensation is normal but high amounts can deteriorate wood quickly.

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## Don't forget to check for:

- Operable hardware
- Soundness, caulking, and weather stripping

# Attic

- Is there evidence of water leaks? Check during or soon after a heavy rain.
- Are there signs of vermin infiltration?
- Is there any missing or damaged pieces of wood? You might have to probe the wood with an ice pick. If you penetrate the wood with an ice pick, and wood pieces break against the wood grain, rot is most likely present.

## Notes

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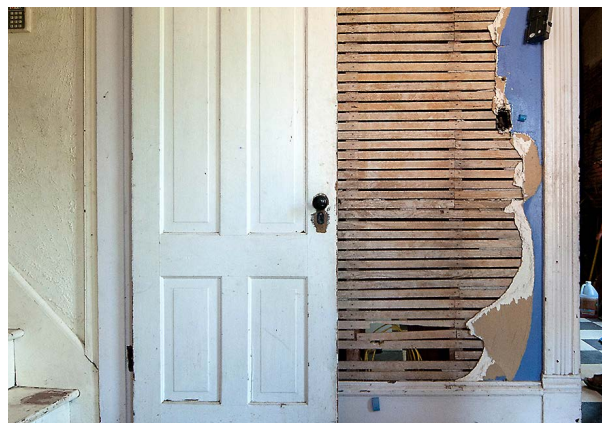
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## Don't forget to check for:

- Proper insulation and ventilation
- Signs of mildew on underside of roof boards
- Straightness and sound condition of rafters
- Operable vents or attic fans

# Interior

- Are there stains on the walls, ceilings, or around the windows? This is evidence of water infiltration.
- Are walls bulging?
- Is paint peeling, blistering, or cracking?
- Is plaster on the walls or ceilings damp, loose, or cracked?



- Do floors deflect (sag or bounce) excessively? This may indicate structural failure and should be checked by a contractor or structural engineer.
- Do doors stick when closed or not operate freely? Binding may indicate uneven settling in walls or floors.

- Does the staircase bounce when you jump on it? Are there missing balusters?

## Moisture

- Is there presence of standing water, mold, fungus, or mildew?
- Are there dank, musty smells in areas of high humidity or poorly ventilated spaces?
- Are there wet stains, eroding surfaces, or efflorescence (salt deposits) on interior or exterior surfaces?
- Is there rust or corrosion on metal elements?

## Electrical

A visual inspection or wire insulation on accessible circuits will usually determine whether an electrician should perform additional tests. Check to make sure breakers or fuses are the correct size. Generally 20 amps for new wiring. For older wiring, no more than 15 amps is recommended. Large homes and home with central air conditioning or electric heat typically need main service of 150 to 200 amps.

- Is the main electrical service to the building inadequate? 100 amps is minimum by modern standards.
- Is there any sub-standard aluminum wire, surface mounted lamp cord or extension cord, or "knob and tube" wiring in active use?
- Fuses or Circuit Breakers?
- Check all light switches and lights attached to the walls to ensure they work properly.
- Is the insulation frayed on existing wires? Are bare wires exposed?

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# Mechanical Systems/Heating & Cooling

Type of Heating and general operating condition: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Rooftop mechanical? Evidence of drips, etc.? Proper drainage and mounting?
- Steam & Forced Hot Water – Is the boiler tank leaking?
- Steam & Forced Hot Water – Is there evidence of leaking pipes? Look for stains and rot on floor around pipes. Rusted pipes, broken traps or valves and pipes clogged with mineral scale build-up generally causes leaking.
- Steam & Forced Hot Water – Are there obstructions blocking airflow?
- Forced Hot Air – Are belts tight and in good condition?
- Forced Hot Air – Does the motor and fan need to be oiled?
- Forced Hot Air – Has the furnace been inspected within the year?
- Is heat distributed evenly?
- Do thermostats work correctly?
- What size is the air filter? When was it last replaced? \_\_\_\_\_
- Type of Water Heater: Gas or Electric? Properly vented? Seismic Restraint? Overflow pan?
- Water supply: City? Well?
- Water Meter?
  - Shut-off valve clearly marked?
  - Backflow device?
- Internal supply lines: Copper/Galvanized/PVC/Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Any noticeable leak/drips?
- Faucets and drains working properly? Evidence of leaks at base?
- Natural Gas Supply?
- Heating Oil tanks?

## Notes

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# Hazardous Materials

Based on the age of your historic property there is a good chance that it retains hazardous materials. Though these materials are typically harmless without ingestion, it is important to know what they are and how to safely remove them during your preservation project.

## Lead Paint

If a “historic” house is broadly defined as being at least 50 years old, this means that almost every historic house contains some lead-based paint. In its deteriorated form, it produces paint chips and lead-laden dust particles that are a known health hazard to both children and adults. Children are particularly at risk when they ingest lead paint dust through direct hand-to-mouth contact and from toys or pacifiers. They are also at risk when they chew lead-painted surfaces in accessible locations.

In addition to its presence in houses, lead paint chips and dust can contaminate soil in outdoor play areas. For more information about reducing lead-paint hazards in historic buildings, read Preservation Brief 37 located at <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/37-lead-paint-hazards.htm>.

## Asbestos

Asbestos was a widely used building material from the 1900s through the 1970s. Since then it has decreased in use; however asbestos can still be found in many historic resources. Unfortunately, asbestos cannot be identified by appearance alone. Before preservation work begins you should hire a professional to conduct an assessment of what materials contain asbestos. If asbestos is found it should be properly removed and disposed of. For more information on asbestos please view: <https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservation/02-11.pdf> and <http://www.deq.state.or.us/aq/asbestos/house.htm>.

## Notes

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This module is part of the Preservation Toolkit developed by Restore Oregon to provide a general orientation to the decisions and processes of historic preservation and reuse. Every project is unique and the information presented does not attempt to address all the aspects or variables that may be encountered. The engagement of a qualified preservation professional is encouraged.

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Since 1977 Restore Oregon has worked to preserve, reuse, and pass forward the historic homes and buildings, bridges and barns, churches and Main Streets that make Oregon, Oregon.

As a nonprofit, our ability to advocate, deliver programs, and produce materials like the Preservation Toolkit depends on the support of people like you. We invite you to stand up for the historic places that matter to you and become a member by visiting us at [restoreoregon.org/join](https://restoreoregon.org/join).

Thank you!



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