

HVAC ESCROW INSPECTION CHECKLIST

What a NATE-certified inspector checks before you close — and what your home inspector doesn't.

Matt Alba, NATE-Certified HVAC Systems Inspector | HVAC Inspections Los Angeles | CA License #1075723 | “*Know Before You Close*”

Use this checklist to inspect your own system, to prepare for a professional visit, or to understand what a general home inspection leaves out. Tick each box as it's verified. Items marked **[PRO]** require instruments and training — they are also where the expensive surprises live.

1. Heating

☐	HEATING CHECKS	WHY IT MATTERS
☐	Heat exchanger condition [PRO]	Cracks are a carbon monoxide risk and usually mean replacement, not repair.
☐	Burner flame quality & ignition	Erratic flame or repeated re-ignition signals a combustion or sensor problem.
☐	Flame sensor	Oxidation causes short-cycling; cleaning often resolves it.
☐	Gas connections & venting [PRO]	Venting defects are the most commonly missed safety issue in older LA homes.
☐	Safety limit switches	Confirms the furnace shuts down safely on overheat.

2. Cooling

☐	COOLING CHECKS	WHY IT MATTERS
☐	Refrigerant charge [PRO]	An under- or over-charged system quietly destroys its compressor over years.
☐	Condenser & evaporator coils	In coastal South Bay homes, salt-air corrosion on fins shortens equipment life.
☐	Compressor amp draw [PRO]	High draw predicts failure before it happens.
☐	Condensate drainage	Blockages cause water damage and indoor air quality problems.
☐	Outdoor unit clearance	Two feet of clear space is required for proper heat rejection.

3. Ducts & Airflow

☐	DUCT & AIRFLOW CHECKS	WHY IT MATTERS
☐	Static pressure [PRO]	The blood pressure of the system; high readings reveal restrictions.
☐	Duct leakage & insulation	Leaky ducts waste capacity you already paid for.
☐	Register airflow & temperature split	Uneven rooms usually start here, not at the equipment.
☐	Filter size & fit	A loose or wrong-size filter lets debris straight onto the coil.

4. Electrical & Safety

☐	ELECTRICAL & SAFETY CHECKS	WHY IT MATTERS
☐	Disconnects & breakers	Undersized or corroded connections are a fire risk.
☐	Wiring condition	Rodent damage and heat degradation are common in LA attics.
☐	Capacitor & contactor health [PRO]	Cheap to replace now, expensive when they strand you mid-summer.
☐	Thermostat operation & calibration	A miscalibrated thermostat masks real performance problems.

5. Code & Permits

☐	CODE & PERMIT CHECKS	WHY IT MATTERS
☐	Permit history for past installs	Unpermitted work surfaces during your escrow or your future sale.
☐	Equipment age & serial verification	Confirms what the listing claims about system age.
☐	Title 24 / HERS duct-test records	California requires verification; missing records become the buyer's cost.
☐	Smoke & CO detector presence	Required, and routinely missing near combustion equipment.

What a general home inspection does NOT cover

Home inspectors confirm the system responds at the thermostat and shows no visible damage. They do not test refrigerant charge, measure static pressure, evaluate the heat exchanger, or perform combustion safety testing — the four checks behind most four- and five-figure surprises after closing.

Timing for buyers

Book the inspection 7–10 days before your contingency period closes, so there is time to act on the findings. A full system replacement in Los Angeles commonly runs \$12,000–\$15,000; documented findings are what your agent uses to negotiate repair credits before the problem becomes yours.

Want this run by the inspector who wrote it?

Flat-fee HVAC escrow inspections across Los Angeles and the South Bay — **\$595 per system**, photo-documented report included. Quotes and estimates are always free.

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