

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Guidelines

1. **PAINT:** Lead from paint, paint chips, and dust is especially harmful to young children and pregnant women. Units built before 1978 with any child who is less than 6 years of age who resides in or is expected to reside in such housing must have all interior and exterior paint surfaces free of cracking, chipping, or peeling paint.

2. **UTILITIES:** Electricity and gas service must be on. However, for the annual inspection gas wall heater pilot lights need not be lit during the summer months from April 15th through October 15th. Residents who have allowed their gas and/or electricity to be turned off for non-payment may be deemed ineligible to occupy an Agency assisted unit.

3. **SECURITY:**
 - All doors and windows that are accessible from the outside (such as basement, 1st floor, or fire escape) must have locks that work.
 - Window security bars must be equipped with a quick release stem; require no special knowledge or skill to operate; and meet local code.
 - All exterior doors (including the door from the garage to the living area) must be sound, have a doorknob, and have a deadbolt lock.
 - No double cylinder deadbolt locks will be allowed on any dwelling unit door or gate. No exceptions!
 - Side garage doors must be reasonably sound and have a lock.
 - At this time bedroom and bathroom doors do not require a lock.

4. **WATER HEATER:**

Whether Gas or Electric, a Water Heater must have:

- A temperature pressure release (TPR) valve.

- A discharge pipe of galvanized steel; hard drawn copper piping and fittings; C-PVC (PVC is not allowed); or listed relief valve drain tube with fittings which will not reduce the internal bore of the pipe or tubing (straight lengths as opposed to coils)
- The discharge pipe shall extend from the valve downward to not less than 6 inches or more than 2 feet above the floor or ground or extend to the exterior.
- The discharge pipe must be the same size as the TPR valve outlet, example 3/4" ...No valve, restriction or reducer coupling of any type should be installed between the TPR and the tank or in the discharge pipe.

Gas Water Heater Requirements:

- No gas water heaters are allowed in bedrooms or other living areas unless properly enclosed; vented to code to supply combustion air; and the enclosure door.
- Gas water heater closet doors must be in reasonably good condition, with tight hinges, and vented with two screened openings of equal size.
- Do not store flammable vapors and liquids, or combustible materials such as newspaper, rags, or mops near the water heater.
- Storage of any items in the gas heater closet is not allowed.
- Do not install an insulation blanket to the bottom of a gas water heater or allow it to sag, restricting the combustion air to the bottom of the heater, as this could result in an unsafe operating condition.
- There must be a 6" clearance around the vent connector from combustible material.

Electric water heater requirements:

- Water heater closet doors must be in reasonably good condition, with tight hinges.

- Storage of any items in the heater closet is not allowed unless the heater was designed and listed or approved for installation adjacent to combustible materials.

WATER HEATERS MUST BE ACCESSIBLE DURING THE INSPECTION

5. **SMOKE DETECTOR(S):** Units must have at least one detector (battery or hardwire) on each level, including basements. None are required in an unfinished attic. They must be operational and installed correctly as follows:
- on wall, placed between 4" to 12" from ceiling
 - on ceiling – place more than 4" from wall
 - do not place in kitchen or near bathroom
 - place in hallway adjacent to bedroom

A basement, attic, or garage converted to a bedroom must also have a smoke detector.

Hearing Impaired: If the unit is occupied by hearing-impaired persons, smoke detectors must have an alarm system, designed for hearing impaired persons, in each bedroom occupied by a hearing-impaired person.

6. CEILINGS AND WALLS:

- Exterior walls must be weather tight. Holes large enough to cause the unit not to be weather tight will be rated as **FAIL**. Gaps around pipes must be appropriately filled to prevent entrance by pests.
- Interior walls must be in reasonably good condition; most cracks and doorknob holes will be rated **NOTABLE**. The resident is responsible for damages to the unit or premises caused by a household member or guest beyond normal wear and tear.
- Painted walls and ceiling shall be reasonably clean and free from mildew and fungus.
- Doorstops are recommended to protect walls (rated Notable on the inspection summary)

7. WINDOWS:

- Windows must be weather tight. No broken panes, large cracks, or missing glass. The outside pane of a double pane window may be removed to remedy a crack or a broken pane. Small corner cracks may be corrected with silicone.
- Dry rot on a window sill is a **NOTABLE** item unless it affects the integrity of the window to the extent that it becomes a safety hazard, i.e....the window pane becomes loose.
- A bedroom must have at least one operable window.
- Units that have not been provided air conditioning or evaporative cooler will be required to have screens on at least one exterior window per room at the time of the move-in.
- A large piece of furniture (headboard, dresser, etc) which covers the only bedroom window will fail an HQS inspection. Emergency escape must be provided.

8. DOORS:

- Knobs should be operational and all sliding doors must be on track.
- At this time, closet doors are not required by HQS.
- Closet doors that present a hazardous condition shall be repaired, replaced, or removed.
- Exterior doors (including the door from the garage to the living area):
 - Must be weather tight: No drafts or gaps;
 - Must be sound, have a door knob, and a single cylinder deadbolt;
 - A hollow core exterior door in deteriorating condition shall be replaced with a solid core exterior door;
 - Bathrooms require a door and door knob; and
 - At this time, bedrooms do not require a door or door knob.

9. **FLOORS AND CARPETS:** Must be free of any tripping hazards such as raised edges or open seams. No exposed tack strips. No ceramic tiles with sharp edges; Soft areas around a toilet or along a tub or shower with a rebound greater than ½ inch will be rated **FAIL**. A rebound less than ½ inches will receive a **NOTABLE** rating by the Inspector. Living areas must have a standard floor and covering; bare or painted concrete is not acceptable.

POOR REPAIRS WILL NOT BE RATED PASS (e.g., torn seam repaired with tape over the tear).

10. **PLUMBING:** Check all pipes, sinks, tubs, and toilets for leaks or stoppages. Flush toilets must be in proper operating condition and be stable: Loose or missing anchor bolts than cause the toilet to move or rock will be treated as **FAIL** item.

11. **ELECTRICAL:** Minimum HQS requirements are:

- The kitchen requires at least one working outlet and one working permanently installed ceiling or wall light.
- The bathroom requires one permanently installed light fixture. At this time, HQS does not require an electrical outlet.
- A Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) is a safety device designed to protect against shock when a faulty electrical appliance allow current to leak to the round. You are not required to install them; however, if present the GFCI must work as designed.
- A bedroom (and most other rooms) requires either two working outlets or one working outlet and one working permanently installed light fixture.
- All outlets and light switches must have a cover plate; non-hazardous cracks are acceptable.
- All receptacles must be free of cracks or chips.
- All electrical hazards must be eliminated, (e.g., exposed wiring, extension cords which run under rugs or other floor coverings, a loose or improper connection to an outlet, improper splicing of wires a light fixture hanging from an electric wire or cord, a short in the light switch, or a broken cord plug).

12. SPACE HEAT:

- A wood stove or a portable electric heater as primary source of heat in a unit is not acceptable. No invented fuel burning space heaters. A heating facility must be capable of maintaining a room temperature of 70 degrees at a point 3 feet above the floor in all habitable rooms, directly or indirectly.
- Furnace filters must be clean at the time of inspection.
- For annual inspections, gas wall heater pilot lights need no be lit during the summer months from April 15th through October 15th.
- No heat when the outside temperature is below 50 degrees F. and the temperature inside the unit is below 68 degrees F. will be considered an emergency requirement correction within 24 hours of notice by the Inspector.

13. APPLIANCES:

- Are to be in good working order with no missing parts such as knobs, drip pans, oven handles, or fridge/oven shelves.
- All stove burners and the oven must work.
- Any gas oven or burner that requires a match to light due to soil, grease, or need of repair will not pass.
- The stove cook top, range hood filter, venting system and areas surrounding the oven shall be clean and free from grease.
- The exhaust fan must work if there is no operable window. It is recommended that the exhaust have a cover.
- A refrigerator does not require a kick plate at the bottom.
- The refrigerator may be provided by the owner or resident. It must work, be an adequate size relative to the needs of the family, and maintain a temperature low enough so that food does not spoil over a reasonable period of time (including some capability for storing frozen goods).

- Any owner-supplied appliance in the unit at initial inspection shall be maintained in proper working order throughout the first year of the lease. At subsequent inspections, any appliances not in proper working order (and not required by HQS) can remain in the unit provided they do not impose a health or safety hazard. In such instances, they will not be rated **FAIL**, however, the contract rent may be adjusted accordingly. Examples of appliances not required by HQS are air conditioners, dishwashers, and garbage disposals.
- A dishwasher must have a bottom panel to pass an HQS inspection.
- Microwave - A microwave oven may be substituted for an owner-supplied oven and stove or range if the resident agrees and microwave ovens are furnished instead of an oven and stove or range to both subsidized and unsubsidized residents in the building or premises.

14. EXHAUST/VENTING:

- The kitchen and bathroom(s) must have either a window which opens or an exhaust fan to clear moisture and/or possible gas/sewer fumes. No gas water heaters are allowed in bedrooms or other living areas unless properly enclosed; vented to code to supply combustion air; and the enclosure has a door.
- **Interior Air Quality** – The dwelling must be free from dangerous levels of air pollution from carbon monoxide, sewer gas, fuel gas, dust and other harmful pollutants. Poor air quality due to pets or housekeeping will be read as **NOTABLE**.

15. FIREPLACE:

- Opening must have a screen or glass covering. It may be provided by the owner or resident.

16. BATHROOM (S):

- There must be at least one bathroom present in the dwelling unit for the exclusive use of the occupant with a working toilet, sink and tub or shower.
- A shower stall requires either a shower door or curtain to prevent the resident from slipping on a wet floor. A curtain is recommended for a shower/tub combination to keep water off the floor. The resident supplies the shower rod

and curtain. Sliding shower doors require a guide at the bottom to prevent swinging.

- All worn and cracked toilet seats or tank lids that present a safety hazard must be replaced.

17. BEDROOM(S):

- Bedrooms in basements, attics, and garages are not allowed unless they meet local code requirements, have adequate ventilation, emergency exit capability, and have a smoke detector.
- Rooms used as a sleeping area (den, living room, family room, dining room, etc) will not be counted as a bedroom for purposes of higher contract rent.
- At this time, permanent built-in closets are not required by HQS.
- If a closet is present, a clothes pole must be provided by owner.
- At this time, a bedroom door is not required by HQS.
- A bedroom must have a floor area of not less than 70 square feet, ceiling height of not less than 7 feet 6 inches, and width not less than 7 feet.

18. YARD MAINTENANCE:

- Front side or back yards shall not be allowed to become dry and overgrown. No dry weeds, grass, trees or bushes that present a hazardous condition. Such conditions will be read as **FAIL**.
- Overgrown green grass, trees or bushes will be rated as a **NOTABLE** item unless the Inspector deems any or all to be a hazardous condition.
- The ground shall be free of any hazardous debris. A hazardous condition would endanger the health or safety of the resident.

NOTE: For units that have backyards, the owner should enter into an agreement with the resident regarding yard maintenance.

19. PESTS:

- The unit must be free from infestation of roaches or other vermin. The owner is responsible even if the infestation is caused by the family's living habits. However, if such infestation(s) are serious and/or repeated it may be considered a lease violation and the owner may terminate the lease agreement.

20. PET(S):

- Residents must have written permission from the owner to have pets of any type on the premises. Dogs **MUST BE ON A LEASH** during the inspection. Excessive amounts of animal urine or feces in the unit or in the yard will result in a resident responsible fail item.

21. GARBAGE OR DEBRIS:

- Whether inside or outside any amount of garbage or debris that is designated by the Inspector as a hazardous condition must be removed.
- A hazardous condition would endanger the health or safety of the resident. For example: items around a gas water heater; items in front of a window or door that prevents emergency exit; the type of material is hazardous such as old batteries or containers of car oil; or items that could attract pests such as old tires, old appliances, inoperative vehicles that the Inspector designates a blight or trash.

22. STORAGE:

- A resident may use the garage or shed to store personal effects unless the amount of material stored presents a health or safety hazard. Owners may not store work related or personal belongings in the subsidized unit, attached garage, attached shed, or on the driveway.
- The resident must have full access to all rooms of the dwelling unit. If the owner and resident enter into a written agreement, a detached garage or shed may be used by the owner to store non-hazardous materials, tools, or equipment used to maintain the property. The detached shed or garage must be locked to prevent entry by all parties except the owner.

23. VEHICLES:

- Inoperative (non-tagged or non-running) vehicles stored in the garage on the premises, or on the parking area of the property must be removed if designated a blight to the neighborhood and/or presents a health or safety hazard.

24. POOLS, SPAS, AND HOT TUBS:

- The standards below apply to private residence and apartment community pools:
- An empty pool is hazardous. It must either be filled with water, backfilled with dirt, or surrounded by a fence adequate in height & construction.
- The water shall be kept clean at all times during the primary months of use April 15th to October 15th. Discolored water during the remainder of the year will be rated NOTABLE.
- Ladders, decks, diving boards, and handrails shall be stable and in reasonably good condition.
- At this time, no additional fence around a filled pool is required by HQS.

25. MOBILE HOMES:

- All HQS requirements that apply to rental housing apply to the manufactured home space.
- A manufactured home must be placed on the site in a stable manner and be free from hazards such as sliding or wind damage.
- Any manufactured home placed on a site that has hazardous conditions such as sliding or high winds must be securely anchored by a tie down device which distributes and transfers the loads imposed by the unit to appropriate ground anchors so as to resist wind overturning and sliding.
- The utility pedestals (water, sewer, and electric hook-ups/connections) must be accessible at all times to facilitate any need repairs or for any emergencies.

26. EXTERIOR:

- The roof must be in reasonably good condition with no leaks.
- Gutters and downspouts should be sound and free from hazards.
- Concrete driveways, sidewalks, and patios should not have large cracks or uneven surfaces. Uneven surfaces are a tripping hazard. A gradual slope from the lower to the higher section, which effectively eliminates the tripping hazard, would normally be an acceptable remedy.
- House/Apartment Number: House number(s) must be clearly visible from the street. An apartment number letter must be mounted on or near the front door. Number/Letters which are too small, same color as the unit, covered by bushes...etc...will not pass.
- It is recommended that vent screens should have no holes, be secure and intact. Vents must not be blocked. The crawl space entrance shall be covered.
- Lighting: All public hallways, stairs, exit ways must have adequate lighting at all times.
- Stairways: Handrails are required on sections of four or more steps. Handrails and stairs must be secure.
- A balcony or porch 30 inches or more above the ground requires railing around it.

27. FENCES/GATES:

- Fences must not have any hazardous conditions. Any portion of the fence that is designated by the Inspector as a hazardous condition must be repaired, replaced, or removed. A hazardous condition endangers the health and safety of the resident. For example: protruding nails near a walkway; severely leaning sections; broken cross supports that would cause the fence to fall or collapse; or possibly missing boards.

28. GARAGE:

- A non-working automatic door opener will be rated **NOTABLE**. Hazardous conditions such as oil puddles or a pan of oil on the floor, a car on jacks, old

batteries, or a garage filled floor-to-ceiling with no egress available for emergencies will be rated a **FAIL**.

29. ACCESS TO UNIT:

- The resident must have direct access to his/her own unit. Units which can only be accessed by passing through another dwelling unit will not pass an HQS inspection.

30. MODIFICATIONS TO UNIT:

- All modifications or adaptations to a unit including those due to a disability must meet all applicable Housing Quality Standards and building codes.

31. SITE AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS:

- The site and immediate neighborhood must be free from conditions which would seriously or continuously endanger the resident's health and safety as determined by the Agency.