

Rental property inspections are made on a routine basis, every other year. It may be more convenient to perform maintenance or make repairs prior to an inspection, or between tenants, when an inspection is not scheduled. To get a head start, use this checklist prior to an inspection. This may help you to avoid a lengthy inspection and potentially costly re-inspection fees. Please note that while it is impossible to list every violation of the housing code that may occur, this list contains violations that are commonly found during a routine inspection. If you have specific situation or concern, please contact the housing inspector at the above noted phone numbers. Be aware that most work must be performed by a licensed tradesperson under a permit.

Inspection Checklist

Outside:

- Are the street numbers visible from the road?
- Is the siding and paint in good condition?
- Is the garage in good condition?
- Are the steps, decks, and landing in good condition and safe to use?
- How about the handrails and guardrails? If replacing rails the height must be 42 inches, with spindles spaced at 4 inches.
- Is there garbage or junk in the yard?
- Are the green areas trimmed and clear of noxious weeds?
- Are the electrical service wires in good shape and not hanging below 10 feet above the grade?
- What is the general condition of the roof?
- Are the doors in good working order with deadbolt locks that are capable of being easily opened from the inside?

Throughout the House

Windows

- Any cracked or broken window panes?
- All windows within 12 feet of the ground must have operable latching hardware.
- All window putty in good condition?
- All openable windows have screens? (No rips, tears, or holes)
- All window frames, sashes and sills in good condition and weatherproof?

Doors

- All apartment doors have single cylinder deadbolt locks? Are they self closing? Doors must be substantially secured from illegal entry. If doors need replacement they must be replaced per code.
- All exterior doors tight against the weather?
- Screen and storm doors in good condition, with adequate hardware?
- In a multi family apartment – do the fire doors self-close to latching?
- In an older home – are the skeleton key locks removed or disabled? (All doors throughout the house)

Surface Coverings

- Are all the walls and ceilings free from peeling pain and loose plaster?
- Any holes in the walls, ceilings, floors?
- Are the floor coverings in good condition?
- Is the carpet ripped or torn, or otherwise causing a possible tripping hazard?

Exit Hallways

- A second means of exiting must be provided from the second floor when the occupancy load exceeds 10 (2000 square feet). Third floors and above must always have a means of exiting to the outside.
- All exits to the building must be unobstructed at all times. No storage is allowed in the stairwells, corridors, or in front of the doors.
- Are the exit and emergency lighting (if applicable) functioning?

Electrical system

- Are all cover plates in good condition and easy to clean?
- Do closet light fixtures hang down on wires? They will need to be updated or removed.
- The inspector will check to see that electrical rewiring has been done under a permit by a licensed electrical contractor.
- Switched light fixtures are required in kitchens and baths. Pull chains as the only light source are prohibited in bedrooms.
- Fuses properly sized? (Look for 15 amp ratings and type S fuses or a 100 amp service)
- Bare, exposed, obsolete or worn wiring; splices or fixtures installed without a junction box will not be permitted.
- Cover plate on the panel box must identify all circuits.
- Is there 36" of clearance in front of the panel?
- Incandescent light bulbs must have a 12" clearance to combustibles.
- Use of extension cords in place of permanent wiring is not permitted.
- Outlet boxes in walls are loose?
- Are the outlets wired properly (improper polarity, neutral connected)?
- Many other conditions require electrical repairs or upgrade. Please call if you have any questions, or contact a licensed electrician. In older homes, it may pay to have an electrical contractor evaluate the electrical system to determine if it is in a safe and adequate condition.

Plumbing

- The most common problems found in plumbing are a cross connection of contaminated water with the potable/drinking water. This can occur through improperly installed or obsolete ballcocks in toilets (lack of one inch air gap between the critical water level of the ballcock and the top of the overflow tube), or unapproved non-anti-syphon ballcock, or through hoses left connected to faucets.
- Fixtures need to have proper venting to the outside.
- Are traps leaking or corroded?
- Are cleanout covers loose or missing?
- Are toilets loose?
- Is the plumbing properly installed? Flexible piping is not permitted. ABS (black) and PVC (white) cannot be glued together.

In the Basement

- Stair safety? Broken treads, loose runners, even sizes and heights?
- Handrails in place?
- Is there an open side of the stairs? It must have a 42 inch tall guardrail with spindles spaced no more than 4 inches apart if installing a guardrail.
- Plumbing leaks? Pipes supported?

In the Basement (continued)

- Check the water heater for a T & P valve and metal drip leg? Are the cold water supply and gas shut off valves functioning? Is the vent installed properly?
- Does the hot water heater supply adequate water at a minimum of 120 degrees Fahrenheit and a maximum of 130 degrees Fahrenheit?
- Dryer vent installed to the outside and made of metal?
- Washer properly hooked up and drained?
- Please note that in older homes, it may pay to have a plumbing contractor evaluate the plumbing system to determine if it is safe and in adequate condition.
- Date of last service to the furnace? Filter reasonable clean?
- Openings in the furnace, venting, and chimney which allow exhaust fumes to escape into the household environment are very serious. Exhaust leaks are difficult to detect and often go unnoticed until harm is done to the occupants. A visual inspection of the equipment is conducted by the inspector. The inspector may require a licensed contractor to certify the equipment.
- Check the clearances on the flues. Six (6) inches normal minimum.
- Gas lines and shut off valves in good condition?
- Smoke detector working?
- Sleeping in the basement is prohibited except as permitted by code.
- Are the basement walls wet or damp? Is there evidence of mold?
- Are the walls plumb?

In the Kitchen

- Sink dripping?
- Trap leaking?
- Drains open and clear?
- Adequate outlets and circuits? (At least one outlet over every counter surface, and GFI protection within 6 feet of the sink.)
- Switched light fixtures?
- Proper sanitation?
- Smoke detector working?
- Are the kitchen cabinets in good condition and installed properly?

In the Bathroom

- Toilet working properly? Not loose?
- Shower, tub, or lavatory dripping faucets?
- Proper traps and drains flow easily?
- Vent fan to the outside or an operable window?
- GFI outlet present? Working?
- Door closes and latches to provide privacy?
- Is the porcelain in good shape?
- Are the tiles or tub enclosure in good shape?
- Is the floor covering impervious to water?

In the Living Room

- At least one outlet on each wall? Two on walls over 14 feet in length.
- Update pull chain lights to wall switch controlled.
- Seven feet four inch (7'-6") minimum ceiling height?

In the Bedrooms

- Update pull chains to wall switch controlled.
- At least two walls with outlets?
- Smoke detector outside each bedroom? Batteries fresh? Properly located? Replace hardwired detectors only with hardwired detectors. Replace battery type with hardwired or battery type.
- Ceiling heights must be seven feet four inches (7'4") minimum.
- Every bedroom shall be a minimum of 70 square feet in size, with the minimum dimension of 7 feet for any wall length. If the room houses more than two people there must be 50 square feet per person.
- Every sleeping room must have two means of escape in case of fire, such as a door and a properly sized window (5.7 square foot clear opening). All basement sleeping rooms must have a door directly to the outside or a legal egress window. All egress corridors must provide reasonable egress and resistance to fire.

Other

- Does each room (particularly bedrooms and bathrooms) have adequate heat? Electric portable heaters are not permitted.
- Are there too many people living in a unit? There must be at least 50 square feet of area in a bedroom per person (including babies) if there are more than two in a room.
- Every apartment must have at least one room with 120 square feet of area.
- Are there adequate containers for the disposal of trash. Is there an appropriate place for storage of the containers?
- Mice and rodents need extermination?

Rooming Unit Rental—Additional Requirements

- Tenants may not cook or have eating facilities within their rooms.
- A bathroom containing a hand sink, toilet, and tub or shower must be available within the structure directly accessible without going outside and must also be on the same floor or a floor adjacent to the rental room. One bathroom must be available for each eight persons.
- Each sleeping room must have a minimum of 70 square feet of floor area or 50 square feet per person for more than 2 people.
- Owners are responsible for weekly changes of supplied linens and towels.
- Owners are responsible for sanitary maintenance of walls, floors, ceilings, and for maintenance of all supplied equipment in common areas and shared bathrooms.

Fire Systems/Equipment

- Automatic detection fire alarm systems are required for apartment buildings of 15 or more units or three stories above grade.
- Fire alarm tests must be done yearly by a qualified contractor.
- Sprinkler systems, standpipes, fire pumps, and other fire protection systems must be tested in accordance with their respective standards by qualified personnel and documented.
- Fire Extinguishers—A2A10BC fire extinguisher must be available in the hall within 50 feet of any apartment door on the same level or a 1A10BC fire extinguisher in each apartment. Laundry rooms and furnace/boiler rooms require 2A10BC extinguishers.

Permits

- Electrical permits are required for all work other than minor maintenance issues. Electrical contractors are required to perform all work in a rental property. Contact the electrical inspector, Darrell Nemeth, at 654-6634 for more information.
- Plumbing permits are required for all work other than minor maintenance issues. Licensed plumbing contractors are required to perform all work in a rental property.
- Mechanical (heating and cooling) permits are required for all work other than routine maintenance on these systems. Mechanical contractors are required to perform all work in a rental property.
- Building permits are required for just about anything beyond decorating. Most permits will only be issued to a licensed contractor or to the property owner.