

Housing Quality Standards (HQS)

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) are not about beautification, but rather safety of your unit. People deserve to live in safe, decent housing, and HQS helps to ensure that for program participants.

It is especially nice all around for a rental unit to pass on the first inspection. To help you prepare for the inspection, we have provided a room-by-room summary of what the inspector will be looking for, below. Please note that the rules governing HQS are extensive, so this is only an overview HQS, and not an all inclusive list.

Living Room

Is there a living room?

Are there at least two working outlets

Or

One working outlet and one working light fixture?

Is the room free of electrical hazards?

Can the windows and doors that are accessible from the outside be locked?

Is there at least one window, and are all windows free of signs of severe deterioration or missing or broken windowpanes?

Are the walls, ceilings, and floors in good condition and free of hazardous defects?

Kitchen

Is there a kitchen?

Are there at least one working outlet AND one working, permanently installed light fixture?

Is the kitchen free of electrical hazards?

Can the windows and doors that are accessible from the outside be locked?

Are all windows free of signs of deterioration or missing or broken windowpanes?

Are the walls, ceilings, and floors in good condition and free of hazardous defects?

Is there a working refrigerator that maintains a temperature low enough so that food does not spoil over a reasonable period of time?

Is there a working kitchen sink with hot and cold running water?

Does the sink have a functioning stopper?

Is there space to store, prepare, and serve food?

Is there a working oven and a stove (or range) with working burners?

If not, is there a microwave oven?

If there is a microwave oven, and it is owner-supplied, do other tenants have microwaves instead of ovens and stoves (or ranges)?

Bathroom

Is there a bathroom?

Is there at least one permanently installed light fixture?

Is the bathroom free of electrical hazards?

Is there a window that can be opened or a working vent system?
Can the windows and doors that are accessible from the outside be locked?
Are all windows free of signs of deterioration or missing or broken windowpanes?
Are the walls, ceilings, and floors in good condition and free of hazardous defects?
Is there a working toilet in the unit, and is that toilet area private (i.e. separated from other areas with a door or curtain)?
Is there a working, permanently installed wash basin with hot and cold running water in the unit?
Is there a working tub or shower with hot and cold running water in the unit?
Do all sinks have a functioning stopper?

Other Rooms Used for Living and Halls

If the room is used as a bedroom, are there at least two working outlets or one working outlet and one working, permanently installed light fixture?
If the room is not used for sleeping, is there a means of illumination?
Is the room free of electrical hazards?
If the room is used as a bedroom, is there at least one window?
Are all windows free of signs of severe deterioration or missing or broken windowpanes?
Can the windows and doors that are accessible from the outside be locked?
Are walls, ceilings, and floors in good condition and free of hazardous defects?
Is there a working smoke detector on each level?
Do the smoke detectors meet the requirements of the Fire Administration Authorization Act of 1992?
In units occupied by the hearing impaired, is there an alarm system connected to the smoke detector?

All Secondary Rooms (not used for living, such as a laundry room)

Can the windows and doors that are accessible from the outside be locked?
Are all rooms free of electrical hazards?

Building exterior

Is the foundation sound and free of hazards?
Are all the exterior stairs, rails and porches sound and free of hazards?
Are the roof, gutters, and downspouts sound and free of hazards?
Are exterior surfaces sound and free of hazards?
Is the chimney sound and free of hazards?
If the unit is a manufactured home, is it properly placed and tied down?
RCHA will require written owner certification that manufactured homes are properly tied down when the inspector is unable to visually verify.

Heating and Plumbing

Is the heating equipment capable of providing adequate heat to all rooms used for living?

Is the unit free of unvented fuel-burning space heaters and other unsafe heating conditions?

Do the windows allow for adequate ventilation and cooling, or is there a working cooling system?

Is the water heater safely located, equipped and installed?

Is the unit served by an approved public or private sanitary water supply?

RCHA will require units at which water is supplied from a well to have a well water test performed, at the cost of the owner, by the county Health Department or a professional water testing company to determine if the water is safe.

Written test results must be provided to RCHA within 60 days of the initial inspection, and before assistance at the unit can begin.

Is the plumbing free of major leaks or corrosion that causes serious and persistent levels of rust or contamination in the drinking water?

Is the plumbing connected to an approved public or private disposal system, and is it free of sewer back-up?

At units served by a septic system, RCHA will require written owner verification that the septic system is properly installed, adequate for the unit, and functioning properly.

General Health and Safety

Can the unit be entered without having to go through another unit?

Is there an alternative fire exit from the building that is not blocked and that meets local or state regulations as an acceptable exit?

Is the unit free of rats and severe infestations of mice or vermin?

Is the unit free of heavy accumulation of garbage or debris inside and outside?

Are there adequate covered facilities for temporary storage and disposal of food wastes, and are they approved by a local agency?

Are interior stairs and common halls free of hazards (i.e., inadequate lighting, missing or insecure railings, and loose, broken or missing steps?)

Do all elevators have a current inspection certificate? Are they working and safe?

Is the unit free of abnormally high levels of air pollution from vehicular exhaust?

Are the site and immediate neighborhood free of conditions that would seriously and continuously endanger the health or safety of the residents?

Whatever is present in the unit, whether required under HQS or not, must work.

For example, the unit is not required to have a dishwasher. However, if a dishwasher is present, it must work properly.

All windows that are designed to be openable must open, and stay open without props.

All openable windows must have screens.

Is there a working smoke detector on each level?

Do the smoke detectors meet the requirements of the Fire Administration Authorization Act of 1992?

In units occupied by the hearing impaired, is there an alarm system connected to the smoke detector?

Are painted surfaces free of defective paint or adequately treated?

Of special concern is potential lead poisoning of children under six years of age.

If the unit was constructed before 1978 AND there is more than a certain square footage of chipped/peeling paint, the following rules will apply:

If you own a pre-1978 unit that requires paint stabilization, you must hire a certified lead-based paint inspector or risk assessor to determine if the paint in question is lead based.

If it is determined the paint is not lead based, your normal workmen may complete the work.

If it is determined the paint is lead based, workmen certified in lead based paint abatement must perform the work. They must use safe work practices to protect the occupants.

The owner must obtain a certificate from the certified workers that the lead based paint was successfully abated before assistance can begin at that unit.

Most Common Fail Conditions include:

Nonfunctional Smoke Detectors (usually the battery)

Missing or cracked electrical outlet cover plates

Chipping/peeling paint

Inoperable stove burners

Improperly installed hot water tank discharge lines

Missing window screens

Failure of windows to stay open without props

Missing or inoperable sink stoppers

Violations of HQS

HQS Regulations must be met prior to approving a unit for the program and throughout participation in the program.

If a unit is found to be in violation of HQS at any time during participation in the program, the owner will be notified and given a reasonable time to correct the deficiencies.

Life Threatening or Emergency deficiencies (i.e. no heat during cold weather) must be corrected within 24 hours.

Non-emergency Deficiencies usually must be corrected within 30 days.

Extensions are given rarely, and then only for very specific (i.e. weather related) issues.

Failure to complete repairs by the deadline will result in abatement of HAP.
During the period of abatement, RCHA will make no HAP to the landlord.
During the period of abatement, the tenant is still responsible ONLY for their portion of the rent.
HAP can resume effective the date the unit passes the reinspection.
Abatements are necessary because tenants deserve to live in a safe, decent, sanitary conditions ensured by HQS, and failure to provide such conditions is in violation of HUD's regulations.
Since prolonged deficiencies can cost landlords rent money, it is important to make repairs in a timely fashion.