



Housing Choice Voucher Program

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Handbook

Please Note: This is only a reference guide for use by a landlord participating on the Housing Choice Voucher Program. All items may not be listed. However, the Bloomington Housing Authority hopes we have provided you with adequate information to assure that your rental unit will be ready for inspection.

General Room Standards

Purpose: To verify that there is adequate living space for the resident.

The unit must have at least the following:

- Living Room
- Kitchen
- Bathroom

The unit must have a room used for sleeping (an efficiency unit may be able to use the living room).

Beyond the minimum size requirement of 72 square feet for each sleeping room, the location and size of the rooms are tenant preference.

Room Electrical Requirements

Purpose: To ensure adequate electrical service and/or lighting for each room.

Each room must have at least the following:

Living room: Two outlets or one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture.

Kitchen: One outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture.

Bathroom: One permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture.

Bedroom: Two outlets or one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture.

Other rooms used for living: No electrical requirement.

All outlets and/or installed ceiling or wall light fixtures that are present must be in safe working condition.

Electrical Hazards

Purpose: To ensure residents are not exposed to electrical hazards.

Items that require a "Fail" rating are as follows:

- Loose, missing, cracked, or broken light switches, outlets, and/or cover plates;
- Light fixtures hanging from electrical wires;
- Frayed or broken electrical wires;
- Exposed fuse box connections (missing knockout plugs);
- Overloaded circuits evidenced by frequently blown fuse;
- Plastic or rubber coated wires mounted on walls or ceilings where they can be abused;
- Electric cords under rugs or other floor coverings;
- Non-working or unsafe outlets;
- Use of improper gauge wiring for permanent electrical wiring systems;
- Open light sockets.

Security

Purpose: To reduce risk of burglary or other unlawful entry into a dwelling.

Windows:

- Windows accessible from the outside must be lockable;
- Locks must work properly and hold securely;
- If the room is used for sleeping at least one window must be open-able unless it is not designed to open (e.g. picture window).

Doors:

- Doors accessible from the outside must be lockable;
- Locks must be securely fastened to the door and work properly;
- Lock striker plates must work and be securely fastened to doorframe;
- Doorframe must not show signs of severe weakness;
- Hinges must be secure;
- Chain locks alone are not acceptable;
- Simple bolt locks are not adequate as only lock on the front door;
- Double-keyed deadbolts are not acceptable

Window Requirements

Purpose: To ensure that windows are located in certain rooms.

Living room: At least one open-able window unless not designed to open (e.g. picture window).

Kitchen: None required.

Bathroom: At least one open-able window or ventilation system required.

Bedroom: At least one open-able window.

Other rooms used for living: None required.

Window Conditions

Purpose: To ensure that all windows are free from severe deterioration, missing, cracked or broken panes and are reasonably weather tight.

Signs of severe deterioration to be rated "Fail" include but are not limited to:

- Broken or missing windowpanes;
- Loose or cracked panes;
- Windows that will not close;
- Windows that will not stay open on own
- Windows that allow drafts to enter;

Ceiling Conditions

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant is not exposed to any structural hazards, or to danger of falling plaster or other surface material, and to assure that ceilings are reasonably weather tight.

Signs of unsound and hazardous conditions or weather-related issues to be rated as “Fail” include but are not limited to:

- Severe bulging or buckling;
- Large holes;
- Falling surface materials;
- Loose sections of plaster in danger of falling;
- Missing parts such as ceiling tile;
- Large cracks.

Wall Conditions

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant is not exposed to any structural hazards and to assure that rooms are reasonably weather tight.

Hazardous defects or weather issues to be rated “Fail” include but are not limited to:

- Severe buckling, bulging, or leaning;
- Damaged or loose structural members;
- Large holes or any sized holes which may allow significant drafts;
- Holes in the exterior wall that may allow drafts or weather to enter.

Floor Conditions

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant is not exposed to any threat of structural collapse or tripping hazards and to ensure that the room is reasonably weather tight.

Hazardous defects or weather issues to be rated “Fail” include but are not limited to:

- Severe buckling;
- Major movement under walking stress;
- Large sections of damaged or missing parts;
- Unsteady or weak;
- Holes that penetrate both the finish in the floor and sub flooring (may allow weather and/or vermin to enter);
- Holes that may be tripping hazards;
- Missing register covers;
- Permanent floor covering or floorboards that may be tripping hazards.

Kitchen

Purpose: To verify that the dwelling unit contains a kitchen or kitchen area for the preparation and storage of foods.

The facilities must contain:

- A separate sink with piped hot and cold water for preparing food and washing dishes:
 - Must be permanently attached;
 - Must be present in the kitchen or kitchen area;
 - Must have a properly connected drain and gas trap;
 - Must be free of leaks;
 - Must turn on and off properly.
- A stove for cooking food
 - Must have a working oven and all burners must be present and working;
 - Hot plates are not acceptable;
 - Must have secure oven doors and handles;
 - Must contain all operating knobs;
 - Oven must heat up and contain at least one rack
- A refrigerator
 - Must maintain temperature low enough to keep food from spoiling;
 - Must have the capacity and ability to store frozen food;
 - Must have a handle to open the appliance;
 - Must contain at least one shelf;
 - Door must close properly to form a proper seal.
- A space for storage and food preparation
 - Some space must be available for storage and preparation of food;
 - Space for storage of food would include pantries, closets with shelves;

Bathroom

Purpose: To ensure that there is at least one bathroom present in the dwelling unit for the exclusive use of the occupant and there is a working toilet, washbasin, tub and/or shower. Bathrooms also require ventilation to prevent the accumulation of unhealthy odors and sewer gases.

- There must be a toilet present:
 - Must be placed where it allows for privacy;
 - Must be connected to an approvable water supply;
 - Must be connected to an acceptable drainage system;
 - Must flush properly;
 - Must not be clogged;
 - Internal hardware and mechanisms must function correctly;
 - Must be secure to floor;
 - Must not have faulty connections resulting in leakage of water or gasses;
 - Must have a gas trap.
- There must be a washbasin present:
 - Must be permanently installed;
 - Must be connected to a system that delivers hot and cold running water;
 - Must be connected to a drain with a gas trap;
 - Must not be clogged;
 - Must not contain leaks;
- There must be a tub or shower present:
 - Must turn on and off properly;
 - Must be permanently installed;
 - Must be connected to a system that delivers hot and cold running water;
 - Must be connected to a drain with a gas trap;
 - Must not be clogged;
 - Must not contain leaks;
 - Must turn on and off properly.
- There must be a form of ventilation:
 - Must have a working exhaust fan or an openable window

Smoke Detectors

Purpose: To reduce the risk of loss of life and to prevent injury in the event of fire.

NFPA Code No. 74 requires smoke detectors must meet the following:

- Location: The basic detection system should consist of one smoke detector outside of each sleeping area and one additional smoke detector unit on each additional living level, including the basement. If hallways are longer than 40 feet between sleeping and living areas, use two smoke detectors.
- Mounting: Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for mounting and servicing the smoke detectors. Place the unit in the center of the hallway ceiling between bedrooms and the living area, not closer than 12 inches from the wall. If you must mount the smoke detector to the wall, it should not be any closer than 6 inches from the ceiling and no further than 12 inches from the ceiling. This is to avoid dead air space.

If the dwelling is occupied by any hearing-impaired tenants, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for the hearing-impaired.

Other Rooms Used for Living and Halls

Other rooms used for living include: Bedrooms, Dining Room, Second Living Room, Family Room, Den, Playroom, or TV Room.

These rooms will be inspected for "Fail" items under the following categories (defined earlier):

- Electricity;
- Electrical Hazards;
- Security;
- Window Condition;
- Ceiling Condition;
- Wall Condition;
- Floor Condition;

Secondary Rooms

Secondary rooms are rooms that do not meet the definition for "other rooms used for living." These rooms may include pantries, laundry or utility rooms, or walk-in closets.

These rooms will be inspected for "Fail" items under the following categories (defined earlier):

- Security
- Electrical hazards;
- Other potential hazardous features.

- Broken, loose, or jagged steps, spindles, or porch areas.

Foundation

Purpose: To ensure that the foundation has the capacity to properly support the building and keep ground water out of a basement or crawl space under normal rainfall conditions.

- Must not have structural defects indicating the potential for structural collapse;
- Must not allow entry of significant ground water;
- Must not have evidence of major recent settling;
- Must not have significant cracks or holes that would allow vermin to enter;
- Must not have severe leaning;
- Must not have large sections of crumbling brick, stone, or concrete.

Stairs, Porches, and Rails

Purpose: To ensure that the condition of interior and exterior stairs, railing and/or porches do not pose a danger to the tenant.

Defects for stairs, porches, and rails that require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Broken, rotting, or missing steps;
- Absence of a handrail where there are three (3) or more consecutive steps;
- Absent or insecure railings around a porch or balcony which is thirty (30) inches or more above the ground;

Roofs and Gutters

Purpose: To ensure the tenant is not exposed to any risk of structural collapse and that the roof provides protection from the outside elements.

Defects that would warrant a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Large holes or other defects that allow significant air or water infiltration;
- Serious buckling or sagging that indicates the potential for structural collapse;
- Not weather tight and allows water to leak through to the interior;
- Significantly insecure or hanging gutters;
- Gutters which are significantly clogged or unable to divert water from foundation

Exterior Walls

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant is not exposed to any danger of structural collapse and that the exterior walls are weather tight.

Defects on exterior walls that would require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Buckling, bowing, or leaning;
- Cracks and holes that allow vermin to enter;
- Falling or missing pieces of masonry;
- Deterioration of portions of the exterior walls that would allow water leakage and/or serious drafts to penetrate.

Chimney

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant is not exposed to the potential collapse of the chimney and that the chimney is capable of safely carrying smoke, fumes, and gases from the unit to the outside.

Defects on the chimney that would require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Serious leaning;
- Evidence of deterioration or disintegration of its parts;
- Large amounts of missing mortar and/or bricks;
- Loose fitting and improperly attached parts on chimneys (e.g. flashing).

Manufactured Home

Purpose: To protect occupants in mobile homes from high wind issues.

- Must be properly placed and tied down according to the proper codes.

Adequacy of Heating Equipment

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant will have adequate heat.

- Heating system must be able to provide adequate heat either directly or indirectly to all rooms used for living;
- Each room used for living must have a direct heat source;
- The unit must maintain a temperature of at least 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

Safety of Heating Equipment

Purpose: To ensure that the occupant is not exposed to hazards of fire or escaping exhaust gases from a heating system.

Unsafe heating system conditions include but are not limited to:

- Un-vented fuel burning space heaters (e.g. kerosene heaters);
- Breakage or damage to heating system that creates the potential for fire or other threats of safety;
- Improper installation of equipment;
- Fuel tanks on floor or ground;
- No manual shut off valve to turn off the flow of fuel or gas burning systems;
- Unprotected fuel lines on the floor;
- Fuel leaks;
- Fuel tanks not vented or filled from the outside;
- Combustible materials around the furnace;
- Unsecured flue pipes and collars;
- Return air not being drawn from separate area other than the furnace.

Water Heaters

Purpose: To ensure that the water heater does not present a hazard to the tenant.

Defects that would require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Combustible materials around the water heater;
- Absence of temperature relief valve or discharge line (discharge line must be no more than 6 inches from the floor);
- Improper flues for venting exhaust gas;
- Water leaks from tank.

Water Supply

Purpose: To guarantee the tenant will have adequate, clean water.

Plumbing

Purpose: To ensure that the dwelling unit is not subject to plumbing problems involving leaking or corroded pipes that could present a hazard to the tenant.

Defects that would require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Leaking pipes;
- Corroded pipes.

Sewer Connection

Purpose: To guarantee that the unit is connected to a properly working sewer system.

Access to the Unit

Purpose: To ensure a tenant has direct access to the unit, thereby assuring privacy of living quarters.

- Private access to the dwelling must be provided.

Exits

Purpose: To ensure that a tenant has an alternate means of exit from the building in case of fire.

Examples of acceptable fire exits are:

- An open-able window;
- Fire escape, fire ladder, or fire stairs;
- A back door opening onto a porch with a stairway leading to the ground.

Evidence of Infestation

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant will not be exposed to infestations of animals, vermin, and/or insects.

Presence of infestation can be evidenced by:

- Rat holes;
- Droppings or fecal matter;
- Seeing vermin;
- Multiple settings of poison.

Treatment Responsibility is specified by the City of Bloomington Property Maintenance Code 16.04.090:

(a) All residential rental units, their accessory structures and exterior premises shall be kept free from pests. All residential rental units or accessory structures thereof in which pests are found shall be promptly exterminated by approved processes that will not be injurious to human health. After extermination proper precautions shall be taken to prevent reinfestation.

(b) The owner of any residential rental unit shall be responsible for extermination within the unit, its accessory structures or on the exterior premises for extermination of pests prior to letting the unit.

(c) The tenant of a single-family detached home shall be responsible for extermination of pests after occupying the premises for thirty (30) days unless the infestation is caused by defects in the premises—in which case the owner shall be responsible for extermination of pests.

(d) The owner of a structure containing two or more dwelling units, a multiple occupancy or a rooming house shall be responsible for extermination of pests.

(e) Regardless of whose responsibility it is to exterminate any pests, if the presence of pests is determined to be the result of actions taken, or not taken, by any tenant, said tenant shall be liable for fines in accordance with Chapter 16.09 of this Title.

(f) This Section pertains only to whose responsibility it is to eradicate the pests; it does not pertain to, regulate, or discuss which party to the lease is to ultimately pay for the pest eradication.

Garbage and Debris

Purpose: To ensure tenant is not exposed to health hazards resulting from heavy accumulations of garbage or trash around the unit. Health hazards include but are not limited to: cutting hazards, allowing nesting of rodents, or unsanitary conditions.

Items that would require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Trash and discarded furniture;
- Discarded appliances;

Refuse Disposal

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant has adequate means of storing and disposing of refuse and garbage.

Adequate covered facilities include:

- Trash cans with covers;
- Garbage chutes;
- Dumpsters;
- Trash bags.

Interior Stairs and Common Hallways

Purpose: To ensure that interior stairways and common hallways of the building are safe and adequately lit so that the tenant is not exposed to safety risks.

Conditions that would require a “Fail” rating include but are not limited to:

- Loose, broken, missing steps or handrails;
- Accumulation of objects on the steps;
- Ripped, torn, or frayed stair coverings such as carpet or mats;
- Missing vertical railings;
- Stairways not properly illuminated.

Other Interior Hazards

Purpose: To ensure unit interior is free of hazards not previously identified.

Examples of other interior hazard items include but are not limited to:

- A protruding nail in a doorway;
- Broken bathroom or kitchen fixtures or countertops which could cause a cutting hazard;
- Interior door deficiencies;
- Windows that will not stay up when raised;
- Tripping hazards.

Interior Air Quality

Purpose: To ensure that the resident is not exposed to abnormally high levels of harmful gases or other noxious pollutants.

Items that would require a “Fail” rating would include but are not limited to:

- Sewer gases;
- Mold;
- Fuel gas;
- Strong pet odors

Site and Neighborhood Conditions

Purpose: To ensure that the tenant is not exposed to any dangerous site or neighborhood conditions.

Items that would endanger the health and safety of residents include but are not limited to:

- Other buildings on or near the property that pose a serious hazard;
- Evidence of flooding or major drainage problems;
- Proximity to open sewage;
- Fire hazards;
- Hazardous or unsanitary items on the ground such as holes, glass, nails, or excessive trash.