

Tips for a Successful Property Inspection

For programs in which the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency is required to perform physical inspections of the properties, we will use whichever inspection protocol is stipulated in the program's regulations. Where we have discretion on the inspection standard, we will utilize the HUD National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE). There are three inspectable areas when using this protocol:

1. **UNIT:** A "unit" of HUD housing refers to the interior components of an individual dwelling, where the resident lives.
2. **INSIDE:** "Inside" refers to the common areas and building systems within the building interior and are not inside a unit. This could include interior laundry facilities, workout rooms, and so on.
3. **OUTSIDE:** "Outside" refers to the building site, building exterior components, and any building systems located outside of the building or unit. This includes things like playgrounds, sidewalks, and air-conditioning units.

Common violations of protocol include:

- Smoke detectors missing or inoperable
- Egress issues, i.e. furniture blocking secondary means of exit in bedrooms or living areas and hallways
- Doors and windows not functioning as intended; they must close, lock, and stay open as intended
- Exterior and interior trip hazards
- Evidence of insects/roaches, or the presence of mice/rats or other vermin
- Leaking faucets/pipes
- Missing/broken cover plates on electric switches/receptacles
- Damage to the exterior of the building

As part of a comprehensive preventative maintenance program, it is expected that the owner or agent periodically inspect the property and dwelling units to identify and correct deficiencies and health and safety hazards. This responsibility may not be delegated to the tenant, regardless of any lease provisions to the contrary.

Preparation Tips

We will randomly inspect a percentage of the vacant and occupied units. Therefore, it is necessary to provide all of the tenant's adequate notification of the inspection in case their units are selected. Include in the notice that the inspector must have access to all of the living spaces and storage areas that are available to the tenants. Ensure that the tenants are aware that the inspector will test the operability of the windows, so window sills need to be clear of objects. Additionally, please note the following:

- All appliances must be operable. Property staff will be expected to turn on all stove burners as well as the oven. Therefore, the stove and oven need to be free of pots and pans for the inspection.
- Windows must operate as intended. A deficiency is a window that cannot be opened or closed. If the window has a lock, the lock must secure the window. Please have the tenants raise the blinds and clear the windows of objects that could interfere with opening or closing the windows during the inspection.
- Units must have hot and cold running water and functioning drains. We will test all of the plumbing fixtures for operability. Please have residents keep sinks free of dishes and other items so proper drainage can be verified.
- All interior and exterior doors must operate as intended. If the door has a lock, then the lock must work.
- There must be two means of exiting each room for emergency evacuation purposes. For bedrooms this includes windows. Therefore at least one window in a bedroom must be accessible as an emergency exit and not blocked by furniture or other items. This window must open, close, and lock as intended. The second means of egress is the bedroom door. The bedroom door must open at least 90 degrees and the door opening not blocked by furniture. Additionally, there must be a clear path throughout the apartment. Hallways must maintain a 36-inch minimum width.
- Smoke detectors will be tested to ensure there is at least one functioning alarm on each floor. The alarm must emit an audible alarm when the test button is pressed.
- All electrical boxes, panels, fuses, disconnects and timer boxes will be inspected for visible safety concerns. Certificates of annual inspection/service for boilers, fire alarms, building sprinkler systems, rechargeable fire extinguishers, and elevators must be available for the inspector. Range Queens/Firestops (fire extinguisher canisters) must not be expired.
- All common areas including offices, playground, laundry room, etc. must be on an accessible route and comply with federal accessibility standards.