

**SECTION 8  
HOUSING QUALITY  
STANDARDS  
OF THE  
HOUSING AUTHORITY  
OF THE  
CITY OF CHARLESTON**

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**THE ACCEPTABILITY CRITERIA LISTED IN THE CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, ALONG WITH THE ADDITIONAL CRITERIA ADOPTED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF CHARLESTON, WILL BE USED IN THE INSPECTION PROCESS WITH RESPECT TO THE CERTIFICATION OF UNITS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SECTION 8 HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS.**

**INSPECTIONS WILL BE PERFORMED INITIALLY PRIOR TO EXECUTION OF A LEASE AND CONTRACT, AT LEAST ANNUALLY THEREAFTER, AND AT ADDITIONAL TIMES OF THE YEAR AS DETERMINED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF CHARLESTON.**

**RECORDS OF ALL INSPECTIONS WILL BE RETAINED ON FILE IN THE SECTION 8 OFFICE.**

**INSPECTION EXPERTISE IS MAINTAINED THROUGH PERIODIC TRAINING, WORKSHOPS, AND STUDY MATERIALS.**

**LANDLORDS WILL BE ADVISED AT APPROPRIATE TIMES OF REPAIRS THAT ARE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PROPERTY UP TO THE ESTABLISHED HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS. THE STANDARDS TO BE USED ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

# ELECTRICITY

## REQUIREMENTS

- LIVING ROOM - Two (2) outlets or, one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture;
- KITCHEN - One (1) working outlet **AND** one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture;
- BATHROOM - One permanently installed ceiling or wall fixture;
- BEDROOM (OR OTHER ROOM USED FOR SLEEPING) - Two outlets or, one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture;
- OTHER ROOMS (USED FOR LIVING) - A means of natural or artificial illumination such as a light fixture, a wall outlet, or a window in an adjacent room (which supplies adequate light).

## INSTALLATION

- Each outlet must be permanently installed on the baseboard, wall, or floor;
- A single outlet may have more than one receptacle (but is considered as only one outlet);
- A permanently installed light fixture is one that is securely fastened to a ceiling or wall, is not movable, and cannot be substituted for an outlet in the aforementioned requirements;
- A table or floor lamp, a ceiling lamp plugged into an outlet, or an extension cord plugged into another outlet cannot be substituted for an outlet in the aforementioned requirements.

## **HAZARDS**

- A broken or frayed electrical wire;
- An exposed or bare metal or copper wire not covered by rubber or plastic insulation;
- A loose or improper wire connected to an outlet or improper splicing of wires;
- A light fixture hanging from an electric wire or cord with no other support;
- A missing or cracked light switch or outlet cover;
- An exposed fuse box connector or connections;
- Overloaded circuits, evidenced by frequently Ablown≡ fuses or Atripped≡ breakers;
- Rubber or plastic-coated electrical wiring mounted on the exterior surface of a wall or ceiling in a manner that could result in it being broken, cut, or otherwise damaged; surface-mounted nonmetallic sheathed wire such as Romex is a hazard of this type; any wiring of this type must be securely attached to a wall or ceiling, out of the way of traffic; a metal-sheathed electrical wire (i.e., conduit) can be mounted on wall or ceiling surfaces irrespective of location;
- A lamp cord that is being used as a permanent part of the electrical system;
- A non-working outlet (if the electrical box or cover plate gives off a shock or if there are scorch marks around the outlet);
- Electric cords which run under rugs or other floor coverings;
- Improper connections, insulation, or grounding of any component of the electrical system;
- A wire laying in or located near standing water, too near where water may splash or other unsafe places;
- An outlet or electrical heating appliance located close to a bathtub.

# SPACE & SECURITY

## SPACE STANDARDS

- The unit must have a minimum of a Living Room, a Kitchen Area, and a Bathroom;
- The unit must contain at least one sleeping or living/sleeping room for every two persons.

## SECURITY STANDARDS

### WINDOWS

- Locks on windows that are accessible from the outside (\*); (a lockable storm/screen window combination with a non-lockable inside window is acceptable); locks must hold securely when placed in the locked position; security bars may be accepted if they are used to lock sliding windows; other acceptable types of locks are sash pins, sash locks or combination windows with latches.

### DOORS

- Locks on exterior doors that provide access to or egress from the unit; all locks should be operable and fastened securely to the door; the lock striker plate should be operable and fastened securely to the door frame; the presence of only a chain lock or slide bolt lock is not acceptable; the door frame must be strong enough to cause the door and lock to close securely and must be free from damage that could seriously affect their use and ability to be locked such as splits, cracks or holes.

(\*) [ACCESSIBLE FROM THE OUTSIDE REFERS TO DOORS THAT OPEN TO THE OUTSIDE OR INTO A COMMON HALLWAY, WINDOWS OR DOORS THAT LEAD ONTO A FIRE ESCAPE, PORCH, OR OTHER OUTSIDE AREA THAT CAN BE REACHED FROM THE GROUND SUCH AS A BASEMENT, FIRST FLOOR OR FIRE ESCAPE WINDOWS].

# **GENERAL ROOM STANDARDS**

## **WINDOWS**

### **LOCATION**

- LIVING ROOM - Requires a window;
- KITCHEN - Does not require a window;
- BATHROOM - Does not require a window if an alternative form of ventilation is present such as an electric ceiling or wall-mounted fan, gravity flow, or shafts designed for this purpose that permit air to escape to the outside;
- BEDROOM (or other sleeping rooms) - Requires a window;
- OTHER ROOMS - Do not require windows.

### **OPERATION**

- All window sashes must be openable, be in good working condition, solid and intact, and fit properly into the window frame;
- Sashes must contain no missing, broken, loose, or dangerously cracked panes;
- Windows must be weather-stripped as needed to avoid any air or water infiltration;
- All windows must be equipped with a window screen whose frame provides a tight seal so as not to provide ingress for insects;
- Portable screens are acceptable as long as there is a minimum available of one per window;
- Defective screen wire may be in a patched condition as long as it is done in a manner that does not provide ingress for insects.

## **DOORS**

### **OPERATION**

- All exterior doors must be weathertight to avoid any air or water infiltration, have no holes, have all trim intact, and have a threshold;
- All interior and exterior doors must contain properly installed hardware such as doorknobs, hinges, striker plates, etc.

## **CEILINGS**

- There should be no structural hazards such as severe bulging or cracking, the presence of large holes, falling surface material, loose sections of plaster, or missing parts such as ceiling tiles;
- Any existing conditions should not cause the room to fail to be reasonably weathertight.

## **WALLS**

- There should be no conditions present with respect to cracked or otherwise damaged plaster or drywall;
- All holes must be properly spackled.

## **FLOORS**

- There should be no conditions present with respect to severe buckling or major movement under walking stress; damaged, missing, or improperly installed parts; cracks or holes which penetrate both the finish floor and subfloor; loose or improperly installed floor covering;
- All floors must be in a finished state (no bare plywood);
- All floors should have some type of baseboard, trim, or sealing for a finished look; vinyl baseboards may be used for kitchens and bathrooms.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- There should be no conditions with respect to unstable stairs; evidence of imminent structural collapse; protruding nails or other objects in walls, floors, or ceilings.

# KITCHEN

- A separate room or area of a larger room which is used primarily for the preparation of meals;
- Is used primarily for the preparation and storage of food; storage is by way of pantries or closets which contain shelves; if no built-in space is provided for storage, a table and portable cabinet are acceptable;
- A bedroom with a refrigerator in it cannot be defined as a kitchen;
- Must have a separate kitchen sink for preparing food and washing dishes, with piped hot and cold water which drains into an approvable system (with a gas trap), with no evidence of water leakage that could present a danger of fire or electric shock; a bathroom sink will not satisfy this requirement;
- Contains a properly-operating stove for cooking food, free of potential hazards due to improper hook-up; all burners on the stovetop must be operable and all control knobs present and operable; tenant-owned microwave ovens may be substituted for a tenant-supplied oven and stove or range; owner-supplied microwave oven may be substituted for an owner-supplied oven and stove or range if the tenant agrees and microwave ovens are furnished instead of an oven and stove or range to both subsidized and unsubsidized tenants in the building or premises; hot plates are not acceptable;
- Contains a properly operating refrigerator for storing food, free of potential hazards due to improper hook-up; may be located in a back hall or pantry; must maintain a temperature low enough to prevent food from spoiling over a reasonable period of time; must have some capacity for storing frozen food; must be adequate in size for the needs of the family
- Contains facilities and services for the sanitary disposal of food waste and refuse.



# BATHROOM

- At least one must be present per unit;
- Must be in a separate room (to ensure privacy), with a flush toilet in operating condition, available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the unit; toilet seats may not be worn or cracked;
- Must have a fixed basin with a gas trap and hot and cold water in operating condition; a kitchen sink is not acceptable for this purpose;
- Must have a shower or a bathtub with hot and cold water in operating condition;
- Facilities must be connected to an approvable disposal system;
- Facilities may be scattered within the unit (such as a toilet in one enclosure and a washbasin in another area);
- Should not contain an electrical outlet or appliance located in an area too near where water may splash;
- All drips or leaks to plumbing fixtures require repair, regardless of the severity or the individual (tenant or landlord) responsible for making payment for the water and sewer service.

# EXTERIOR

## **BASIC OBJECTIVES**

To ensure that:

- the foundation has the capacity to properly support the building and keep groundwater out of the basement under normal rainfall conditions (i.e., no severe structural defects indicating the potential for collapse, no structural instability indicated by evidence of major recent settling, no large cracks or holes, no large sections of crumbling brick, stone or concrete, no undermining of footings, walls, posts or slabs, no major deterioration of wood support members resulting from water damage or termites);
- the condition of all exterior stairs, railings, and porches is sound and free from hazards (i.e., broken, rotten, or missing steps or boards, absence of or an insecure handrail where there are four or more consecutive steps (with the porch or landing being the fourth step), absence of or an insecure railing around a porch or balcony which is thirty (30) inches or more above the ground);
- the tenant is not exposed to any risk of structural collapse and that the roof protects the tenant's unit from the outside elements and the exterior walls are weathertight; should be no signs of serious buckling or sagging, holes, or other defects which would allow significant amounts of water or air to enter the unit, water damage to interior ceiling(s);
- the tenant is not exposed to the potential collapse of the chimney and that the chimney is capable of safely carrying smoke, fumes, and gasses from the unit to the outside; should be no evidence of leaning, deterioration, or disintegration (such as missing bricks or mortar), or metal chimney parts that do not fit tightly and/or are improperly attached;
- the dwelling is free from hazards of lead-based paint;
- the exterior walls structure and surface contain no severe buckling, bowing or leaning, large cracks, falling or missing pieces of masonry, significant deterioration of portions which would allow water and serious amounts of air to enter the unit, large holes or defects that would result in vermin infestation;
- all plumbing exposed to the elements is adequately insulated in order to avoid damage during cold weather.

# HEATING SYSTEM

## OBJECTIVE

- To assure that the occupant will have adequate heat in the unit during the cold months of the year;
- To determine whether the unit is free from unvented fuel-burning space heaters or other types of unsafe heating conditions.

## ADEQUACY

- System must be capable of maintaining a certain temperature during a designated time period;
- System must be capable of providing adequate heat directly (a working radiator, a working hot-air register, or baseboard heat) or indirectly (heat can enter easily from an adjacent room) to all rooms used for living;
- A kitchen stove with a built-in heater is not adequate;
- Portable electric heaters are not adequate.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Landlords are responsible for the routine replacement of filters in central heating systems.

## **SAFETY**

Unsafe conditions would consist of:

- escaping gases from disconnected or broken vent pipes;
- unvented fuel-burning space heaters;
- improper fuel storage and supply lines;
- fuel storage tanks not raised off of the floor;
- a shut-off valve absent at the base of a tank housing fuel;
- fuel leaks or unprotected fuel lines running across floors;
- a fuel tank not vented and not filled from outside the unit;
- the lack of a manual shut-off device for a gas-burning furnace;
- presence of combustible material around a furnace;
- the existence of an improper flue or chimney;
- lack of a proper vent;
- a flue pipe and collar which do not fit tightly against the wall;
- inadequate clearance of combustible materials around the flue;
- a flue not being properly directed from the furnace to a chimney;
- improper installation of the heating equipment;
- improper maintenance of the heating equipment;
- heavy build-up of soot and creosote around the chimney and/or the flue;
- inadequate source of clear return air in the forced warm air system;
- return air not drawn from an area separate from the furnace area;
- Major leaks in radiators or ductwork may promote heat loss and affect the heating devices'

capability to satisfactorily heat all habitable rooms in the unit.

# COOLING SYSTEM

## **OBJECTIVE**

- To assure that the occupant will have adequate ventilation in the unit during the hot months of the year.

## **TYPES**

### **WORKING**

- Central (fan) ventilation;
- Room or central air conditioner; (while not required, malfunctions that result in water leakage to the interior of the unit must be repaired).

### **NATURAL**

- Window screens on openable windows;
- Screen doors or storm doors; (while not required, if present, they must be in good condition, solid and intact, and fit properly within the door frame).

# WATER HEATER

## OBJECTIVE

- To ensure that the hot water does not present a hazard to the occupant.

## HAZARDS

- A gas water heater located in a bedroom or other living area where safety hazards may exist (unless safety dividers or shields are installed);
- Combustible materials piled up against the heater or flue;
- Gas leakage;
- Danger of flooding;
- Seriously cracked or broken vent pipes on gas-fired water heaters which allow unexpended gases to escape into the unit;
- Absence of temperature-pressure relief valve and discharge line;
- Improper flues for venting exhaust gases;
- Serious leaks;
- A tag by the utility company indicating an unsafe condition.

# **WATER AND SEWER**

## **OBJECTIVE**

- To determine whether the unit is served by an approvable public or private sanitary water supply and to guarantee that the tenant will have adequate clean water.

## **PLUMBING**

- Should be free of leaking and corroded pipes that could present a hazard to the occupant.

## **SEWER**

- Must be connected to a properly working sewer system (public or private); if private, the system must meet local health and safety standards.



# **GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

To ensure that:

- the tenant has direct access to his or her own unit, thereby assuring privacy of living quarters;
- the tenant has an alternate means of exit from the building in case of fire; exits cannot be blocked or obstructed by debris, used as storage, secured by nailing, etc.; must meet local or state requirements and be considered adequate by the appropriate local officials; may consist of any one of the following: a fire escape or fire stairs, an openable window if the unit is located on the first or second floor or easily accessible to the ground, and exit through windows with the use of a ladder if windows are above the second floor, a back door or opening onto a porch with a stairway to the ground
- the tenant will not be exposed to serious infestations of rats, mice, or other potentially harmful vermin;
- the tenant is not exposed to health hazards resulting from heavy accumulations of garbage or trash in or about the unit (heavy being large piles of trash, garbage, and/or discarded furniture and/or debris that cannot be picked up by an individual within one or two hours);
- the tenant has adequate means of storage and disposal of garbage and refuse (i.e., trash cans with covers, garbage chutes, dumpsters, or trash bags);
- the interior stairways and common hallways of the building are safe and adequately lit so that the tenant is not exposed to safety risks (i.e., loose, broken or missing steps, absent or unsecured railings, inadequate lighting, an accumulation of objects or debris on the steps, ripped, torn or frayed stair coverings such as carpets or mats, a large number of missing sections of vertical railing, missing or unsecured handrail on a section of four or more steps (with the landing considered to be the fourth step);
- the interior of the unit is free from any other hazards not specified or identified elsewhere, such as protruding nails, broken bathroom fixtures with jagged edges, or doors in danger of falling because of faulty hinges;
- elevators, when present, are operating in a manner that does not pose a safety hazard to the occupant;
- the occupant is not exposed to abnormally high levels of harmful gases or other noxious

pollutants such as carbon monoxide, sewer gas, fuel gas, dust, etc.;

- the tenant is not exposed to any dangerous site or neighborhood conditions such as other buildings on or near the property that pose serious health or safety hazards (i.e., a dilapidated shed or garage with potential for collapse), evidence of flooding or major drainage problems, proximity to open sewage, fire hazards, abnormal air pollution or smoke which continues throughout the year, or continuous or excessive vibration caused by vehicular traffic.

### **SMOKE DETECTORS**

- Each unit must have at least one (1) battery-operated or hardwired smoke detector on each level of the dwelling unit, including basements but excluding crawl spaces and unfinished attics;
- The replacement of malfunctioning or non-functioning batteries in battery-operated smoke detectors is the responsibility of the landlord;
- Detectors must be installed in accordance with and meet the requirements of National Fire Protection Association Standard (NFPA) 74 or its successors (currently NFPA 72);
- Detectors must have an alarm with a minimum rating of 85dBA at ten feet (or as low as 75 dBA if installed in the same room as the user, such as in a bedroom);
- For units assisted prior to April 24, 1993, owners who installed battery-operated or hardwired smoke detectors before that date to comply with HUD smoke detector requirements will not be required to later comply with any additional requirements mandated by NFPA 74, that being that the owner would not be required to install a smoke detector in a basement not used for living purposes, nor would he/she be required to change the location of the detectors already installed on the other floors;
- If the unit is occupied by any hearing-impaired person, smoke detectors must have a visible signal alarm system designated for hearing-impaired persons as specified by NFPA 74, or successor standards and connected to a smoke detector outside of the bedroom; for rooms no larger than fourteen (14) feet by sixteen (16) feet, the visual alarm must have a minimum rating of 177 candelas; for larger rooms, the visual alarm must be within sixteen feet of the pillow; if the visual alarm is installed more than twenty-four (24) inches below the ceiling, a minimum rating of 110 candelas is allowed.
- Each detector shall make an alarm that is clearly audible in all bedrooms over background noise with all intervening doors closed.

### **INSTALLATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms;
- On each story of the living unit, including basements and excluding crawl spaces and unfinished attics;
- If the unit is new construction, there must be a smoke detector in each sleeping room whose installation must be arranged so that the operation of any detector will cause all other detectors to alarm;
- In split-level units (adjacent levels with less than one full story separation), a smoke detector installed on the upper level will suffice for the adjacent lower level unless there is a door between one level and the adjacent lower level;
- Hard-wired smoke detectors must be on an unswitched portion of a branch circuit or on a dedicated branch circuit;
- In rooms with ceiling slopes more than one (1) foot of rising per eight (8) feet, the detector must be on the high side of the room;
- A smoke detector in a stairwell must be placed to ensure that smoke rising in the stairwell cannot be prevented from reaching the detector because of an intervening door or obstruction;
- A smoke detector placed in a basement must be in close proximity to the stairway leading to the floor above;
- If mounted on the ceiling must be at least four (4) inches from the wall;
- If mounted on the wall, the top of the detector must be no less than four, nor no more than twelve (12) inches below the ceiling;
- If the wall or ceiling could be considerably warmer or colder than the room (such as a poorly insulated ceiling below an unfinished attic or an exterior wall), the detector must be mounted on an interior wall;
- If installed in an area with an open-joisted ceiling must be placed on the bottom of the joist;
- Located so that jarring or vibration will not cause accidental operation;
- Mounted so that it is not supported by wiring;
- May not be installed in kitchens garages or other spaces where the temperature can fall below

- 32 degrees Fahrenheit or exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit;
- Unless specifically listed for this purpose, may not be located closer than three feet from the door to a kitchen or bathroom containing a tub or shower or supply registers of a forced air heating or cooling system;

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- Modifications or adaptations to the unit due to a disability must meet all applicable housing quality standards codes;
- Owners are responsible for routine grass-cutting of common areas in units consisting of two or more units.

# **MANUFACTURED HOMES**

All previously listed housing quality standards requirements, plus:

- Must be securely anchored by a tie-down device that distributes and transfers the loads imposed by the unit to appropriate ground anchors to resist wind overturning and sliding;
- Variances for areas of low wind zones may be approved by local HUD Field Offices;
- Alternative types of anchors, beams, and foundation bolts are permissible if they meet the manufacturer's specifications.