

# Housing Quality Standards (HQS)

## Reference Guide

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, Sioux Falls Housing (SFHRC) 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. (Efficiency units use the living room as a 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 and/or outlet covers
  - 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

## Security

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

- Windows must:
  - Be accessible and lockable from the outside must be lockable
  - Have locks that 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 (ex. Picture window).
- Doors must:
  - Be lockable and accessible from the outside
  - Have locks that work properly and are securely fastened to the door
  - Have lock striker plates that work properly and are securely fastened to doorframe
  - Have secure hinges
  - Have a doorframe that does *not* show signs of severe weakness
  - Be equipped with more than chain locks
  - Be equipped with more than only bolt locks (i.e., deadbolts) for the front door

## Window Requirements

**Purpose:** To ensure that each room has the adequate number of windows.

- Window requirements, by room, are as follows:
  - Living room - At least one open-able window unless not designed to open (ex. Picture window)
  - Kitchen - None required
  - Bathroom - At least one open-able window or ventilation system
  - Bedroom - At least one open-able window unless not designed to open (ex. Picture window)
  - Other rooms used for living - None required.
- At least one window in each room must open unless not designed to open to provide for ventilation.

## Window Conditions

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

- 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 allow drafts to enter
- Unsecured or badly deteriorated meeting rails

### **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
  - Damage or loose structural members
  - Any hole that may allow significant drafts into the unit
  - 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
- Holes approximately four (4) inches in diameter or larger (ex. missing register covers)
- Permanent floor covering or floorboards that may be tripping hazards

## **Lead Paint**

**Purpose:** To protect tenants from exposure to lead base paint and the risk of lead paint poisoning.

- If the unit was built prior to 1979, but a child under the age of six (6) *does not* reside in the unit, the unit will not be inspected for lead paint.
- If the unit was built prior to 1979, and a child under the age of six (6) resides in the unit, the unit must be inspected for lead paint. In this case, the following should be inspected for lead paint:
  - Large surfaces - Large surfaces, like ceilings, walls, floors, and decks, should not have with more than two (2) square feet of defective paint inside unit or in any entrance or hallway providing access to the unit. Deteriorated paint meeting these conditions should be removed.
  - Small surfaces – Small surfaces like windowsills, baseboards, railings, and trim may not have unstable or defective paint on 10% of the total surface area.
  - Exterior walls - Exterior walls with more than twenty (20) square feet of unstable or defective paint must be properly removed.
- SFHRC has written instructions for removal of unstable or defective paint upon request.

## **Kitchen**

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

- A separate kitchen or kitchen area must be primarily for the preparation and storage of food. The facilities must have/contain:
  - A separate, permanently attached sink with piped hot and cold water for preparing food and washing dishes
  - A properly connected drain and gas trap
  - Plumbing must turn on and off properly and be free of leaks
  - A stove for cooking food or microwave oven. (Microwaves may only be used if this is the only form of cooking provided to all tenants.)
  - A working oven with working burners. (Hot plates *are not* acceptable.) This oven must have a secure oven door and handle, contain all operating knobs, heat up, and contain at least one rack.
  - A refrigerator that maintains temperature low enough to keep food from spoiling. This may be in a pantry or back hall.

- Refrigerators should have the following:
  - A space for storage
  - The capacity and ability to store frozen food
  - A handle to open the appliance
  - At least one shelf
  - An unclogged drain plug must (i.e., there isn't standing water in the bottom of the refrigerator)
  - A properly sealing door
- Some space for food storage, preparation, and serving food. This space may include storage of food pantries and closets with shelves. Or, if there is no built-in storage provided, a table and portable storage cabinet are acceptable.
- On an initial inspection, if supplied by the landlord, the stove/oven and the refrigerator must be present and working properly as stated above.

## **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.

- Each bathroom must have a toilet, which must:
  - Be placed where it allows for privacy
  - Be connected to an approvable water supply
  - Be connected to an acceptable drainage system
  - Flush and operate properly
  - *Not* be clogged
  - Be secure to the floor
  - Be free from faulty connections that result in leakage of water or gasses
  - Have a gas trap
- Each bathroom should have a washbasin, and this must:
  - Be permanently installed
  - Be connected to a system that delivers hot and cold running water
  - Be connected to a drain with a gas trap
  - *Not* be clogged
  - Turn on and off and *not* contain leaks
- Each bathroom should have a tub or shower, which must:
  - Be permanently installed
  - Be connected to a system that delivers hot and cold running water
  - Be connected to a drain with a gas trap
  - Must not contain leaks
  - Turn on and off properly and *not* be clogged
- Each bathroom must have some form of ventilation, which includes 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 that 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 manufacture'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 tenant, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for the hearing-impaired.

### **Other Rooms Used for Living and Halls**

Other rooms used for living may include Bedrooms, Dining Rooms, Second Living Rooms, Family Rooms, Dens, or Playrooms. 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
- Lead Paint Requirements

### **Secondary Rooms**

Secondary rooms are rooms that do not meet the definition for "other rooms used for living." These rooms may include pantries, laundry 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

### **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.

- The foundation ***MUST NOT***:
  - Have structural defects indicating the potential for structural collapse;
  - Allow entry of significant ground water;
  - Show evidence of major, recent settling;
  - Have significant cracks or holes that would allow vermin to enter;
  - Have severe leaning;
  - Have large sections of crumbling brick, stone, or concrete

### **Stairs, Porches, and Rails**

**Purpose:** To ensure that the condition of interior and exterior stairs, railings 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 handrail where there are three (3) or more consecutive steps
  - Absence or insecure railings around a porch or balcony which is thirty (30) inches or more above the ground
  - Broken, loose, or jagged concrete steps or porch areas

## **Roofs and Gutters**

**Purpose:** To ensure the tenant is not exposed to any risk of structural collapse and that the roof protects the tenant's unit 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 significant amounts of water to leak through to the interior;
  - Significantly insecure or hanging gutters
- Gutters are not required. However, they must be secure if they are present.

## **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 bricks
  - Loose fitting and improperly attached parts on metal chimneys



## Manufactured Home

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

- Manufactured homes must be properly placed and tied down according to the building and occupancy codes.
  - SFHRC will supply the landlord with a form to certify that the tie downs have been properly installed and secured.

## 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 heat source (directly)
- Each room not used for living must have heat coming from some other location in the unit (indirectly)
- The unit must maintain a temperature of at least 65°

## 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 limited to:
  - Un-vented fuel burning space heaters (ex. 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 included but are not limited to:
  - Leaking pipes
  - Corroded pipes

## **Sewer Connection**

**Purpose:** To guarantee that the unit is connected to 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 include:
  - An open-able window if the unit is on the first floor or easily accessible to the ground;
  - 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 insects.

- Presence of infestation can be evidenced by:
  - Rat holes
  - Droppings
  - Rat runs
  - Seeing vermin
  - Multiple settings of poison

## **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
  - Non-functioning motor vehicles

## **Refuse Disposal**

**Purpose:** To ensure that the tenant has adequate means of storage 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
  - Hazards on the ground such as holes, glass, or nails