

RESIDENTIAL RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

PRE-INSPECTION GUIDE & CHECKLIST



Your property has qualified for the Residential Rental Inspection Program, which requires your property to be inspected by the City of Cincinnati's Department of Buildings and Inspections (B&I). To assist you with preparing your building for inspection we have prepared this guide. By surveying your property for the items listed on this guide prior to the inspection and taking the necessary corrective action, you can avoid receiving many of the typical violations found in residential rental property. Additionally, this guide will assist you in mitigating violations that prevent you from receiving a four (4) year rental certificate. Also, thoroughly familiarize yourself with the Housing Code found on this website (link shown below). The Housing Code is the primary code used as a measure against the condition of your residential rental property to determine a compliance status. If you need assistance with or clarification of the code or the checklist, please contact your assigned inspector at the phone number provided or B&I at 513-352-3275.

https://library.municode.com/oh/cincinnati/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITXICIBUCO_CH1117HOCO .

EXTERIOR

CHIMNEY

Chimneys that are exposed on several sides tend to deteriorate more rapidly than other masonry. Also, products of combustion can create moisture/ condensation from the inside of the flue that may accelerate deterioration. Replace loose mortar on the chimney and check the flue with a mirror from the clean out in the basement to ensure flues are clean, safe and un-obstructed.

- Cracked or broken chimney cap
- Defective flue liner
- Missing or defective mortar or bricks
- Missing "clean out" opening for flue maintenance

ROOF, GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS

Check and clean the gutters after the leaves drop in the fall and as needed. Clogged gutters will cause ice buildup in winter that leads to serious damage. Check the physical condition of the roofing material routinely for damage and replace any defective covering. Keep metal flashings and box gutter liners painted and free of leaks. An experienced roofer can estimate the years of serviceability left on your roof before it must be replaced. Set aside funds to meet this need when it's time for replacement. Make sure downspouts are sewer connected and stormwater is disposed of properly. Water infiltration and leaks are the number one cause of damage in residential properties.

- Defective or missing roofing material
- Deteriorated flashing or valleys
- Deteriorated/ leaking box gutters
- Defective or missing gutters and downspouts
- Defective awnings or canopies

EXTERIOR SURFACES

Check the exterior coverings on the building for maintenance. Exposed wood or metal must be protected from decay by painting or protective covering. Defective or rotted parts must be replaced along with loose trim or decorative pieces. Remove loose defective caulking at joints and re-caulk and keep sealed. The exterior must be free of flaking paint and any masonry kept tuckpointed and in good weathertight condition.

- Missing or defective siding
- Defective trim, fascia or eave boards
- Peeling paint

MASONRY & FOUNDATION WALLS

Foundation walls in older properties will exhibit minor settlement cracks. However, horizontal cracks in walls that are bowed, or bulging signal a more serious problem and should be assessed by a professional. Foundations and masonry walls should be examined for structural integrity, cracks, and missing mortar. Missing mortar in joints should be tuckpointed with cement and other cracks and openings properly sealed to prevent moisture, insects and rodents from entering. Grade the earth or paving around the foundation to drain stormwater away from the foundation.

- Defective or missing mortar
- Damaged or missing bricks or blocks
- Serious cracks or bows in foundation walls
- Foundation not reasonably watertight

PORCHES, DECKS, AND APPURTENANT STRUCTURES

Porches and balconies tend to decay due to exposure. Floors must be structurally sound, guardrails securely anchored, and steps solid and safe for walking and free of trip hazards. Stairs with more than 4 risers require a handrail. Raised floor surfaces over 30" from the ground require a guardrail at least 30" in height and adequate to protect persons using the space from falls. Porches and all exterior wood or metal parts of the building subject to decay must be painted or protected. For wood decks, check the attachment to the house where failure is common. Look for rotted decking, missing flashing, rusted bolts, popping nails, and weakened fasteners at the point of attachment to the building.

- Defective or missing boards in porch floors, trim, or ceilings
- Deteriorated or missing step treads, risers or stringers
- Inadequate or missing handrails, balusters or guardrails
- Defective porch columns, joists, rafters and other structural elements

NOTES:

- a. Handrails are required on all stairs of more than four risers.
- b. Handrails must be between 30 and 38 inches above the nosing of the step tread.
- c. Replacement handrails and guardrails require balusters that will prevent the passage of an object greater than four (4) inches in diameter.
- d. New guardrails must be 36 inches in height for residential property (less than 4 dwelling units) and 42 inches for commercial property.

WINDOWS & DOORS (exterior & interior)

Windows are important to provide adequate healthful amounts of natural light and ventilation. Windows need to be openable and stay in the open position when raised for ventilation. Windows in bedrooms are also used for emergency escape and rescue in a fire. They must be unobstructed so a fire fighter can fit through in full gear for rescue. Doors help meet the human needs of both security and privacy. Windows and doors must not be drafty to maintain heat in the winter and prevent the passage of smoke and fire under fire conditions. The Housing Code Sec. 1117-11.7 Escape and rescue from sleeping rooms: For each sleeping room below the fourth story, at least one window or exterior door shall remain operable and unobstructed for emergency escape and rescue. Bars, grills, or screens placed over the opening shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool, or force greater than that which is required for normal operation of a window. If there is more than one window or door in a sleeping room, the largest and most accessible opening shall be designated for escape and rescue. Window unit air conditioners may not be installed in a designated escape and rescue window.

- Doors and windows are drafty or not maintained weathertight
- Defective window sashes
- Inoperable windows or doors, sleeping room window blocked
- Missing or cracked windowpanes
- Missing or defective door or window trim, sills or casings, split jambs
- Missing or defective hardware (locks, latches, doorknobs, sprung hinges, etc.)
- Peeling paint unprotected windows or doors
- Missing required bedroom____ or bathroom____ doors for privacy

NOTES:

- a. All dwelling unit doors must be tight fitted and require locking devices for security
- b. All windows within 10 feet vertically above grade or within 6 feet horizontally of an accessible surface require locking devices
- c. Window openings required to be operable for egress or ventilation shall be equipped with latching devices, bars, or grilles only, which are openable or removable from the interior without the use of a key, tool, excessive force, or special knowledge
- d. At least one window in sleeping rooms may not be obstructed to permit emergency egress and rescue

YARD WALKS & STEPS, PAVED AREAS

Off street parking is required to be maintained under the zoning code. Paving must be lined or striped for parking spaces and maneuvering aisles maintained clear. Steps and walkways normally used for ingress must be maintained safe and free of trip hazards. Slips, trips, and falls are the most common accidents in residential property, and protective rails and guards must be maintained in safe functional condition. Existing stairs must be sound and reasonably uniform in riser height to prevent an unpredictable walking surface and trip hazard.

- Defective steps – broken concrete, uneven trip hazard
- Missing handrails on more than 4 risers
- Defective yard walk – cracked and disjointed concrete, trip hazard

- Paving or yard drains clogged
- Potholes in paved areas or parking slab, no lines painted for parking areas
- Accumulations of snow and ice
- Parking on grass/ unpaved areas
- Lights must be provided from the exit discharge of the building to the public right-of-way
- Dumpster enclosure is missing or ineffective

GARAGES/SHEDS/ ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Accessory structures such as sheds, garages, retaining walls, fences and similar structures must be maintained in good repair and free from hazards.

- Defective walls, roof, gutters, or siding
- Structural failures
- Defective trim, fascia or eave boards, windows or other deteriorated parts
- Defective or inoperable doors____, unsecured and open to trespassers____
- Peeling paint, blighted, unsafe conditions
- Defective leaning or failed retaining walls
- Unmaintained or unsafe fences
- Swimming pool not adequately enclosed

YARD & PREMISES

Be sure to keep the yard and premises in good well-maintained condition. A clean orderly environment will attract better law-abiding tenants and make your property a good neighbor. Establish a daily or weekly routine as needed of policing the property for trash and litter and make sure tenants have adequate trash receptacles in accordance with the Municipal Code Chapter 729-Waste Disposal. Keep the grass cut and do not let grass grow over 10 inches in height. Keep an eye on the condition of any trees on the property. Dead trees and limbs are a hazard and must be cut and removed to avoid injury when they fall.

- Condition of yard, outdoor storage and sanitation
- Soil erosion or landslide/hazardous earth condition
- Accumulation of rubbish and/or garbage
- Overgrown weeds, grass, trees or bushes
- Exterior storage
- Unsafe trees, dead trees, or dead tree limbs

INTERIOR

GENERAL MAINTENANCE

Establish a proactive pest extermination schedule as needed on a routine basis to avoid infestations of roaches, rodents and other vector. House numbers on the buildings must be conspicuously displayed so emergency responder can readily find the location etc. The Housing Code Sec. 1117-19 Space Requirements limits the

number of occupants. Overcrowding creates an unhealthy living environment detrimental to both physical and mental health. All spaces and rooms must be adequately illuminated and ventilated so as not to endanger health and safety.

- Insect, mice or rat infestation
- Apartment entry doors not properly numbered
- House Numbers not visible on the exterior
- Evidence of overcrowding
- All hallways, stairways, entrances are properly illuminated

NOTE: LEAD PAINT HAZARDS- Existing painted surfaces that must be disturbed to correct violations may contain lead. Disturbing more than twenty (20) square feet of painted surface on the exterior of a property built before 1978 may require Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) Certification through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA provides more information on lead paint hazards on their website- <http://www2.epa.gov/lead>.

Residences built before 1978, occupied by a low-income family with young children, may be qualified to receive federal funding to aid in these repairs. Visit The Cincinnati Health Department website at <http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/health/> and click on "Lead Poisoning Prevention" for more information.

LEAD POISONING: Small children two years and younger in particular are more susceptible to lead hazards. Children of this age crawl on the floor where lead dust is found and often put their fingers and hands in their mouths. Even a small amount of lead dust ingested by a child can cause permanent brain damage and even death.

SAFETY & FIRE PROTECTIVE FEATURES

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) estimates that over the last 10 years there was a 2% increase in residential fires and an 8% increase in fire fatalities. It is important to give tenants early warning of a fire so they can escape in time by making sure smoke detectors are properly installed and routinely tested. Under the Cincinnati Fire Prevention Code Photoelectric detectors are required (Chapter 1235 Detectors, Early Fire Warning Systems). The minimum for existing residential properties is a detector outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the sleeping areas in each living unit and one on each level of the building including basements.

- Smoke detectors not properly installed non-functional
- CO detectors improperly installed or inoperable
- Defective or missing required fire alarm systems, test records not up to date per fire code
- If a Sprinkler System is required, test records not up to date per fire code
- Fire extinguishers have not been properly serviced and are not properly located and installed

USFA reports that contributing factors in 37 % of fire fatalities were egress and escape problems. Nothing may be stored in a required exit. In a fire, the person escaping does not take time to close the door behind them, allowing smoke and fire to quickly fill an exit making it impassable for escape. Therefore, fire doors must be "self-closing." Combustion builds great pressure and will push doors open. Fire doors must also be "self-latching." Establish a routine of walking the building weekly or as needed to ensure all fire doors will "self-close" and "self-latch." Confiscate "hold open devices" such as wood wedges or objects used to prop fire doors open. As part of

the routine, check all common area smoke detectors, hall and exit lights, emergency egress lights, illuminated EXIT signage and ensure all are in good working order.

- All hallways, exists, stairways, doorways, elevators, accessible routes, etc. free of obstructions, trash/litter and clutter
- Illuminate EXIT signage non-operational
- Defective or missing emergency egress lighting
- Required fire doors not well fitted, do not self-close, do not self-latch
- Fire escapes not professionally examined per Building Code Chapter 1127
- Multiple dwelling more than two stories does not have two separate & remote means of egress.

INTERIOR STAIRWAYS

Falls on stairs are one of the leading causes of injury in residential properties. Nothing should be stored or left on stairs and the condition must be free of trip hazards. Handrails must be between 30 and 38 inches above the nosing of the step tread for stairs more than 4 risers. Stairways must be kept clean and illuminated to a level of 3-foot candles measured at the floor.

- Defective or missing handrails, balusters or guardrails
- Inadequate illumination from dusk until dawn
- Defective or missing step treads, risers or stringers
- Defective or loose stairway carpet or floor coverings
- Defective stairway supports or landings

NOTE: Handrails are required on both sides of interior stairs more than 44" in width.

WALLS, CEILINGS AND FLOORS

Walls and ceilings must be kept clean and sanitary, free of large holes or cracks and loose flaking material. Surfaces of bathrooms must be of a material that is impervious to water, so they are easy to keep clean and sanitary. Plaster or drywall ceilings that are sagging are dangerous. If a regulated amount of plaster or wall coverings in older buildings must be disturbed, follow lead safe abatement practices so that lead paint hazards do not result.

- Walls and ceilings not structurally sound
- Defective plaster, drywall, or other surface materials
- Defective, peeling, loose, paint
- Floors are not structurally sound
- Floor coverings are not intact and create a trip hazard
- Space beneath sinks are not maintained impervious and clean

PLUMBING

It is the landlord's responsibility to keep adequate hot and cold water supplied to fixtures. Even minor plumbing leaks must be promptly addressed to avoid costly damage and mold. Moisture invites rodents and insects

promotes the growth of mold and rots or deteriorates many different building materials when subjected to prolonged exposure. The presence of rodents and insects in turn produce droppings that are an allergen. A slow drip of a faucet if ignored can also run up the water bill surprisingly high. Check basement floor drains to ensure water has not evaporated from the trap allowing sewer gas to back up. Also, check the traps on sinks and lavatories for drips and tighten loose fittings found during routine inspections. Have slow running drains cleared before a complete clog and overflow can occur.

- Defective fixtures, sinks, faucets, toilets, showers, tubs, etc.
- Defective water heater, laundry sinks, supply lines
- Inadequate water pressure, improperly connected water lines, missing water lines, or water leaks
- Missing traps, defective waste lines, or clogged/ slow drainage or back up
- Defective or illegal or unsafe gas piping, uncapped gas valves

ELECTRICAL

Electrical hazards can cause fire, electrocution, injury or death in residential occupancies. NFPA reports that electrical failures are the second leading cause of residential fires (Behind unattended equipment) The Cincinnati Housing Code identifies known electrical hazards for correction. Have electrical systems checked by a professional electrician and correct defects immediately.

- Light fixtures defective, broken, not functional
- Over fusing (installation of overcurrent protective devices which exceed the approved circuit carrying capacity of the conductors), or bridging of required fuses
- Electrical receptacles and switches not functioning, broken, missing cover plates
- Service panels are intact, grounded, and have proper working clearance
- Defective, illegal or open wiring or splices
- Overloaded services, feeder or branch circuits
- Lighting fixtures with pull chain switches mounted above plumbing fixtures
- Extension cord abuse (extension cords used as permanent wiring)

HEATING AND VENTILATION

The owner must provide heating facilities which are capable of safely heating all habitable rooms and toilet rooms to a temperature of 70° F., at a distance of three feet above the floor level at the center of the room when the outside temperature is 0° F. Fuel burning appliances can create a deadly, odorless, colorless, tasteless substance called Carbon Monoxide (CO), when incomplete combustion due to improper fuel/air ratios occurs. Blocked chimney flues can cause this poison gas to enter the living area causing flu like symptoms and death. Make sure there is adequate combustion air provided to these appliances for complete combustion and that the equipment is kept clean and is professionally maintained.

- Defective/ non-functional furnace or boiler
- Defective vent piping (chimney connector) for gas, oil or solid fuel burning appliances
- Illegal wiring or installation of equipment
- Equipment undersized inadequate to heat the unit
- Carbon Monoxide leaks
- Unvented solid fuel burning space heaters in use

BASEMENTS & ATTICS

Basements may not be used as habitable space unless they are lawfully finished and meet the requirements of Housing Code Section 1117-23. - Habitable Rooms Below Grade. Basements and cellars are often dark, damp, and unhealthy and have a long history of illegal occupancy due to crowding. Attics are also found illegally remodeled and lacking adequate ceiling height and both attics and basements used for sleeping may lack required emergency and rescue windows as well as two remote and separate means of egress.

- Basement being used as sleeping area when not approved as habitable room below grade
- Improper storage, clutter or debris
- Illegal construction/ use in attic_____ Basement_____
- Significant water or moisture intrusion
- Lack of adequate ventilation
- Lack of proper exits

RESIDENTIAL RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM PRE-INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Address: _____

Date: _____

- Missing or defective door or window trim, sills or casings, split jambs
- Missing or defective hardware (locks, latches, doorknobs, sprung hinges, etc.)
- Peeling paint unprotected windows or doors
- Missing required bedroom_____ or bathroom_____ doors for privacy

EXTERIOR

CHIMNEY

- Cracked or broken chimney cap
- Defective flue liner
- Missing or defective mortar or bricks
- Missing clean out for flue

ROOF, GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS

- Defective or missing roofing material
- Deteriorated flashing or valleys
- Deteriorated built-in gutters
- Defective or missing gutters and downspouts
- Defective awnings or canopies

EXTERIOR SURFACES

- Missing or defective siding
- Defective trim, fascia or eave boards
- Peeling paint

MASONRY & FOUNDATION WALLS

- Defective or missing mortar
- Defective or missing bricks or blocks
- Serious cracks or bows in foundation walls
- Foundation not watertight or water damaged

PORCHES AND ATTACHMENTS

- Defective or missing boards in porch floors, skirting, trim or ceilings
- Defective or missing step treads, risers or stringers
- Defective or missing handrails, balusters or guardrails
- Defective porch columns, joists, rafters, and other structural elements

WINDOWS & DOORS (exterior & interior)

- Doors and windows are drafty or not maintained weathertight
- Defective window sashes
- Inoperable windows or doors,
- Missing or cracked windowpanes

YARD WALKS & STEPS, PAVED AREAS

- Defective steps – broken concrete, uneven trip hazard
- Missing handrails on more than 4 risers
- Defective yard walk – cracked and disjointed concrete, trip hazard
- Paving or yard drains clogged
- Potholes in paved areas or parking slab, no lines painted for parking areas
- Accumulations of snow and ice
- Parking on grass/ unpaved areas
- Lights must be provided from the exit discharge of the building to the public right-o-way.
- Dumpster enclosure is missing or ineffective

GARAGES/ SHEDS/ ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

- Defective walls, roof, gutters, or siding
- Structural failures
- Defective trim, fascia or eave boards, windows or other deteriorated parts
- Defective or inoperable doors_____, unsecured and open to trespassers_____
- Peeling paint, blighted, unsafe conditions
- Defective leaning or failed retaining walls
- Unmaintained or unsafe fences
- Swimming pool not adequately enclosed

YARD & PREMISES

- Condition of yard, outdoor storage and sanitation
- Soil erosion or landslide/hazardous earth condition
- Accumulation of rubbish and/or garbage
- Overgrown weeds, grass, trees or bushes
- Exterior storage
- Unsafe trees, dead trees, or dead tree limbs
- House Numbers not visible on the exterior

INTERIOR

Address: _____

Apartment # _____

Date: _____

GENERAL

- Insect, mice or rat infestation
- Apartment entry doors not properly numbered
- Evidence of overcrowding
- All hallways, stairways, entrances are properly illuminated

SAFETY & FIRE PROTECTIVE FEATURES

- Smoke detectors not properly installed non-functional
- CO detectors improperly installed or inoperable
- Defective or missing required fire alarm systems, test records not up to date per fire code
- If a Sprinkler System is required, test records not up to date per fire code
- Fire extinguishers have not been properly serviced and are properly located and installed
- All hallways, exists, stairways, doorways, elevators, accessible routes, etc. free of obstructions, trash/litter and clutter
- Illuminate EXIT signage non-operational
- Defective or missing emergency egress lighting
- Required fire doors not well fitted, do not self-close, do not self-latch
- Fire escapes not professionally examined per Building Code Chapter 1127
- Multiple dwelling more than two stories does not have two separate & remote means of egress.

INTERIOR STAIRWAYS

- Defective or missing handrails, balusters or guardrails
- Inadequate illumination from dusk until dawn
- Defective or missing step treads, risers or stringers
- Defective or loose stairway carpet or floor coverings
- Defective stairway supports or landings

WALLS AND CEILINGS & FLOORS

- Walls and ceilings not structurally sound
- Defective plaster, drywall, or other surface materials
- Defective, peeling, loose, paint
- Floors are not structurally sound
- Floor coverings are not intact and create a trip hazard
- Space beneath sinks are not maintained impervious and clean

PLUMBING

- Defective fixtures, sinks, faucets, toilets, showers, tubs, etc.
- Defective water heater, laundry sinks, supply lines.
- Inadequate water pressure, improperly connected water lines, missing water lines, or water leaks
- Missing traps, defective waste lines, or clogged/ slow drainage or back up
- Defective or illegal or unsafe gas piping, uncapped gas valves
- Hot & cold water not supplied to all fixtures

ELECTRICAL

- Light fixtures are working intact covers/shades
- Electrical receptacles and switches are functioning and in good state of repair
- Exterior entrance lights are installed and operational
- Service panels are intact and have proper working clearance
- Defective, illegal or open wiring
- Illegal use of extension cords
- Illegal electrical installations

HEATING, VENTILATING AND AIR CONDITIONING

- Defective/ non-functional furnace or boiler
- Defective vent piping (chimney connector) for gas, oil or solid fuel burning appliances
- Illegal wiring or installation of equipment
- Equipment undersized inadequate to heat the unit
- Carbon Monoxide leaks
- Unvented solid fuel burning space heaters in use

BASEMENTS & ATTICS

- Basement being used as sleeping area when not approved as habitable room below grade.
- Improper storage, clutter or debris
- Illegal construction/ use in attic _____ Basement _____
- Significant water or moisture intrusion
- Lack of adequate ventilation
- Lack of proper exit

