

Emergency Housing Voucher Program

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Guide

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established **Housing Quality Standards (HQS)** to define the minimum criteria for safe, decent, affordable, housing. In general, all units rented to voucher holders must have heat, hot and cold running water, and an operable window in each living room, bedroom, and private bathroom, and a kitchen with a working stove and refrigerator. In addition, the public space areas that are accessible to voucher holders must not include any hazards.

To ensure that any unit rented by an EHV holder meets HQS, an inspection is conducted by NYCHA or HPD. The inspection is conducted before the voucher holder moves into the unit.

NYCHA will contact the owner to schedule the inspection after the rental package is accepted.

HPD will request the inspection after the rental package is determined complete. For rental packages processed before 2/28/22, HPD will schedule an inspection only if a child under the age of 6 is in the household or if there are serious Code Enforcement violations. For packages processed after 3/1/22, HPD will contact the owner to schedule an inspection.



Visit nyc.gov/ehv to learn more about the Emergency Housing Voucher Program.

Preparing for an HQS Inspection

As an owner, you can plan ahead by assessing the condition of your unit, the exterior, and public space prior to a scheduled inspection. This will help to ensure there are no issues that could result in a failed inspection.

The following is a general list of inspection standards, intended to be used as a guide only.

Rooms (General)

- The unit must have a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and one living/sleeping room for every two family members
- The sleeping area must be at least 80 square feet
- The living room can be used as a sleeping room
- Ceilings, walls, windows, and floors must be in good condition. There should be no peeling, chipping or cracking paint; no loose or cracked tiles; no holes in the walls, ceilings or floors
- The unit must have adequate heat
- There should be no signs of bug or rodent infestation

Electrical Outlets and Light Fixtures

- Each bedroom must have either two electrical outlets or one outlet and one permanent light fixture
- Light fixtures and outlet covers should not be cracked or loose and there should be no exposed wires

Kitchen and Bathroom

- The unit must have a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupted (GFCI) outlet installed within 6 feet of a water source in the bathroom if the building was built or renovated after 1986
- For kitchens, a GFCI outlet must be installed if the building was built or renovated after 1996
- Bathrooms require a permanent light fixture but an outlet is not required
- The kitchen requires a permanent outlet but a permanent light fixture is not required



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Heat and Hot Water

- Each unit must have an adequate source of heat and hot water, and hot water sources must meet established minimum/maximum temperatures

Smoke Detectors

- All units must have at least one working smoke detector that is battery operated, hardwired, or hardwired with a back-up battery on each level of the unit
- The smoke detector must be installed on a ceiling, or wall 4 to 12 inches from the ceiling
- If a tenant is hearing impaired, the alarm must be designed for hearing-impaired persons

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- All units must have a working carbon monoxide detector that is battery operated, hardwired, or hardwired with a back-up battery
- The carbon monoxide detector must be installed in the unit within 15 feet of any sleeping area, and cannot be installed in a bathroom or kitchen or within 5 feet of gas cooking appliances
- If a tenant is hearing impaired, the alarm must be designed for hearing-impaired persons
- Note: When conducting Housing Quality Standards inspections, inspectors will check ALL combination smoke/carbon monoxide detectors, smoke detectors, and carbon monoxide detectors present for proper installation and operation. One smoke detector is required. However, if an inspector sees evidence of a missing smoke detector (i.e., a bracket on the wall or ceiling with no detector), it will be cited as a missing detector even if there is another properly working and installed detector in the same area. To avoid citations, when you install a new smoke detector, remove the bracket of the old smoke detector that you are uninstalling.

Windows and Window Guards

- There must be at least one window that opens and closes in each room used for sleeping to provide ventilation and illumination (a skylight is acceptable if it is openable)
- Windows must also have permanently attached and adequate locks
- New York City law requires that owners of multiple dwellings where children 10 years of age or younger reside to install and maintain window guards in the units where those children will reside and in public spaces

Lead Paint Disclosure

- Buildings built before 1978 may have paint containing lead. Owners are required to disclose the presence of lead-based paint or lead-paint hazards in the unit and public spaces to the tenants

Interior of Building

- Interior stairs and halls must be hazard free and fire exits must be unblocked
- Elevators must be working and have a current inspection certificate
- Interior is free of vermin, garbage, and debris
- Intercom must be in good working order

Street and Exterior

- Site and immediate neighborhood must be free from conditions which endanger the health and safety of tenants
- Exterior stairs, rails, porches, founding, and chimney must be hazard free
- Must have adequate covered facilities for garbage
- All surfaces accessible to children under 7 years old must be free of cracking, peeling, and loose paint to prevent exposure to lead-based paint

What are the most common HQS failures?

- **Electrical hazards:** exposed wires, loose or broken light fixtures
- **Window conditions:** improperly installed, missing window guards
- **Ceiling conditions:** severely cracked or damaged ceiling, missing or damaged ceiling tiles
- **Floor conditions:** missing or broken tiles, exposed sub-floor, uneven floor, tripping hazards
- **Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** missing batteries, missing detector, installed in the wrong location

What Happens if a Unit Fails HQS

HPD or NYCHA will notify the owner of the violations and the timeframe required to make repairs. The owner must notify the PHA when repairs are made so a reinspection can be scheduled.

More information about HQS

NYCHA:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/section-8/housing-quality-standards.page>

HPD:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/inspections.page>