



Housing Inspection Office

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CITY OF MARSHALLTOWN

HOUSING CODE

PRE-INSPECTION GUIDELINES

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In an attempt to provide rental property owners or their agents the opportunity to pre-inspect their rental units, the Housing Inspection Office, in conjunction with the City Building Division, and the City Electrician, has prepared this inspection guideline. **This guideline is not to be considered all encompassing.** This information is provided as general information only. For more specific details concerning rental inspections refer to the Housing Ordinance or contact the appropriate division of the City. (You may access the complete Housing Ordinance, Section 15, at the City of Marshalltown's website: <http://www.ci.marshalltown.ia.us/>, click on the link for Code of Ordinances.)

It shall be noted that no city department, division, or employee will be held liable for deficiencies noted during actual inspections. The intent of this general guideline is to aid a landlord or agent in determining the areas of deficiency that may exist in their properties. If any party has a question regarding any portion of the actual inspection process or the guideline, we recommend they contact either the Housing Inspection Office, the City Building Division, or the City Electrician.

I. GENERAL RULES

All rooms must meet the following

Security:

Each room shall have locks that work on all windows and doors that can be reached from the outside, a common public hallway, fire escape, porch or other outside place that can be reached from the ground. **A window that cannot be opened is acceptable, if the window is not required to be openable by other sections of the code.**

Electrical - Fixtures:

There must be at least two electric outlets, or one outlet and one permanent overhead light fixture. Table or floor lamps, ceiling lamps plugged into a socket, and extension cords are not considered as permanent fixtures.

(Note: See attached statement from City Electrician, which further explains electrical issues. If you have any questions regarding the electrical code, contact a licensed electrician or the City Electrician. Only licensed electricians may perform electrical work in rental properties in the City of Marshalltown. All areas shall meet the specifications of the NATIONAL ELECTRIC CODE- NFPA #70 as prescribed by Iowa Administrative Code #5.800(4).

Electrical - Hazards:

Items which constitute an electrical hazard include: broken or missing cover plates on electrical outlets. An inadequate number of outlets for the required electrical demand, this is normally indicated by overfusing of circuits or excessive use of multiple outlet adapters. Other items include; frayed appliances cords, standard grounded outlets showing an open ground, permanent use of extension cords in place of electrical outlets, missing ground lug on appliance cords, and wiring splices not in approved junction boxes. The only extension cord that is acceptable is a Power Strip with a breaker. A qualified electrical contractor shall be contacted to assess the required corrective methods.

Note: Ground Fault Interrupters (GFI) are required for receptacles located near water in both the kitchen and bathroom, also for basements, garages and outdoor areas. This is only required when a current receptacle is replaced or a new receptacle is being installed. For further detail contact a licensed electrician or the City Electrician.

Water Supply:

The apartment is required to have a plumbing system that is served by an approved public or private water supply system.

Plumbing System:

Water pipes shall be in good condition, with no leaks and no serious rust that causes the water to be discolored.

NOTE: All plumbing shall be installed, maintained, and repaired by a licensed plumber. See attached statement from City Building Division regarding plumbing inspections.

Hot Water Heater:

The hot water heater shall be located, equipped and installed in a safe manner. Each hot water heater shall have a safety relief valve with an extension tube, that has a diameter matching the relief valve, that extends to within six (6) inches of the floor to prevent discharge on any person.

NOTE: All gas piping work must be performed by a licensed gas fitter. See attached statement from City Building Division regarding gas piping and inspections.

Sewer Connection:

The sewer system is required to be connected to an approved public or private disposal system and be free from any sewer backup or slow draining system. **Note:** Sump pumps shall not discharge into the city sanitary sewer system.

Heating System:

The heating system shall provide adequate heat to all rooms used for living purposes. **Safety:** The building shall be free from any possible exposure to an unvented fuel, either from heating systems with poor venting systems, or other types of unsafe heating conditions. Furnaces shall be properly maintained in a safe operating condition. Each furnace shall be periodically certified by a qualified technician. Boilers and octopus style furnaces must be inspected annually and a dated certification tag attached.

Smoke Detectors:

Most fire fatalities occur during sleeping hours when the victim is most vulnerable. Smoke and carbon monoxide gases created by a fire seriously affect the capabilities of the victim to escape by the time they are awakened and are alert enough to do so. **Smoke detectors are required near each apartment sleeping area and in each common area. Additionally, smoke detectors required on each level or story of the complex or home, in each basement area, and all common areas such as laundry rooms, day rooms, or recreational rooms, as required by IOWA CODE.**

For further information regarding smoke detectors, location requirements, new construction, etc., contact the Fire Marshal, (754-5751).

Fire Extinguishers:

Fire extinguishers are required in each apartment or in a common area within 75 feet of travel distance of the most remote area. Fire extinguishers in common areas not within each apartment are to be provided on each floor, and are required to have more extinguishing capabilities. The extinguisher within each apartment shall have a minimum rating of 1A-10BC, fire extinguishers in common areas shall have a minimum rating of 2A-20BC. Extinguishers shall be mounted on the wall so that the top of the extinguisher is no higher than five (5) feet from the floor for easy access.

Fire extinguishers are required to be inspected and if necessary tested and refilled on an annual basis to insure reliability. Each extinguisher shall have a tag attached to it identifying the certified person or company which conducted the inspection, and the date of the inspection. The extinguisher needs to be mounted in an area where it will be easily accessible.

If a landlord or agent purchases a fire extinguisher from a retail outlet, for use in rental property, the sales slip must be attached the first year. There after the unit shall have the annual inspection tag attached.

If an extinguisher is used it shall be the responsibility of the tenant to have the unit recharged, if the tenant uses the extinguisher from the apartment. If a fire extinguisher from a common area is used to extinguish a fire, it is the responsibility of the landlord to have the unit recharged.

Exits:

Each apartment shall have access to at least two separate exits.

Exceptions:

- a. The apartment has its own private separate exit. This will require either providing an exterior door at ground level, outside stairway, or one hour protected interior stairway.
- b. The apartment has access to a common outside stairway. This shall be an open stairway without any enclosures.
- c. The apartment has access to a protected single exit. Exit is separate by fire-rated construction and self-closing fire doors. The apartment may open directly upon the exit or may be located no further than 20 feet away.

Exit Locations:

Exits must be remote from each other where applicable. There shall be no obstructions or storage in required exit ways. Each exit shall be arranged so that no single fire will block both exit ways. Dead-end corridors, single access corridors shall not exceed 35 feet.

Travel Distance to Exits:

The travel distance shall not exceed 150 feet to the exterior of the building. To correct the deficiency provide an exterior exit to the outside of the building. As an alternative, you may sprinkle the building which would allow the travel distance to be increased to 200 feet.

Protection of Exiting Corridors:

Walls are required to be one-hour construction and in good repair. This requires the corridor openings such as doors to have a 20 minute fire resistive rating. ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO RATED DOORS IS TO PROVIDE SOLID CORE WOOD DOORS AT LEAST 1-3/4" THICK WITH UL listed - SELF-CLOSING HINGES.

Lighting/Exit Signs:

Exit ways are to be illuminated with more than one bulb. Illuminated exit signs are required only when the occupant load exceeds 50 or the building exceeds 10,000 square feet of net area. An electrical contractor should be contacted for proper installation of this lighting system. For assistance in determining the proper placement of the exit signs and emergency lighting contact the Fire Marshal.

Emergency Lighting:

Emergency lighting is required in apartment buildings when the occupant load exceeds 50. Emergency lighting shall be placed so that the exit ways will be illuminated during an electrical failure. Contact an electrical contractor or the Fire Marshal for assistance in location, and installation of such a system.

Vertical Openings:

Every stairway, elevator shaft, and other vertical openings must be enclosed and protected with one hour construction.

Alarm Systems:

Apartments must be protected by a manual alarm system, automatic alarm system, or an automatic sprinkler system if the building is over three stories or has fifteen or more apartments. Manual pull stations are required to be installed near each exit and connected to an alarm which can be heard throughout the building.

Hazardous Areas:

Furnaces, laundries, storage closets, repair shops, garages, etc., must be separated from the remainder of a building by one-hour construction and rated self-closing fire doors. One method of correcting this deficiency is to separate the hazardous area with one-hour walls consisting of 2x4 studs with 5/8" sheet rock on both sides. The door must be 20 minute fire rated or 1 3/4" wood, solid core, with UL rated self-closing hinges. Sheet rock should also be applied to the ceiling. As an alternative, floor joists with sound sub-flooring will provide the necessary separation. Any stairway from the interior of the house to the basement will be required to have a fire rated door with self-closing hinges separating both sides. A basement with outside access only and not used in common by the tenants or occupants will not be required to be separated.

Cooling System:

The apartment is required to have adequate means to cool the interior atmosphere by means of operable window or a working cooling system.

Ceiling Condition:

Ceiling must be in good condition. Unacceptable conditions include large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as paper or plaster.

Window Condition:

There must be at least one window. Every window must be in good condition, and must be able to remain in the open position, at 6 to 8 inches, without assistance. Unacceptable conditions are windows with broken or missing panes, and windows that do not shut or, when shut, do not keep out the weather.

Floor Condition:

Floors must be in good condition. Unacceptable conditions include large cracks or holes, missing, warped, or spongy floor boards or covering that could cause someone to trip.

Wall Condition:

Unacceptable conditions include large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging or leaning that may constitute structural safety, or falling surface material such as plaster.

Interior/Exterior Paint:

All interior and exterior surfaces must be free of cracking, scaling, peeling, chipping, and loose paint or adequately treated and covered to prevent exposure of the occupants to lead-based paint hazards.

Note: The requirements for interior/exterior paint conditions apply if there are occupants under the age of six (6).

Infestation:

Each apartment shall be free from infestation from rats, mice, or cockroaches and any other vermin which are considered to be a health hazard to the occupants of the building. If the infestation is determined to be in one unit, then the occupant of that unit is required to take the necessary steps to eradicate the apartment of the infestation. If the entire building or common areas are determined to have an infestation problem, then the owner of the property is responsible for eliminating the health hazard. If continuous infestation is evident, despite household remedies, then it may be necessary to obtain the services of a commercial exterminator. This may be required by the Fire or Health departments depending upon the conditions.

Garbage and Debris:

Large piles of trash and garbage, discarded furniture, debris, and unlicensed automobiles or their parts are in violation of the City of Marshalltown's public nuisances ordinance. Trash or discarded furniture, unlicensed automobiles and their parts also pose a safety hazard to children.

Refuse Disposal:

Apartments shall be provided with adequate covered facilities for temporary storage and disposal of food wastes and garbage. **Adequate covered facilities** include trash cans with covers, garbage chutes, and dumpsters in sufficient quantity to contain the disposed materials of the tenants.

Interior Stairs and Common Halls:

Interior stairs and common halls shall be free from any safety hazards to the occupant, such as; loose, broken or missing steps on the stairways, absent or insecure railings; inadequate lighting; or any other obvious hazard such as loose or torn flooring, carpeting or falling and missing plaster or sheet rock.

Interior Hazards:

The apartment shall be free from any hazard not specifically noted on the inspection form.

Elevators:

All elevators in an apartment house shall have a current inspection certificate and be in proper working order.

Interior Air Quality:

Each apartment shall be free of abnormally high levels of air pollution from vehicular exhaust, sewer gases, dust, rotting food, animal waste or other pollutants. Abnormally high means that the levels of noxious gases are consistently present in amounts that would constitute a continuing health hazard to the occupant(s).

Site and Neighborhood Conditions:

The area around the building and the neighborhood conditions are taken into consideration to determine that no occupant will be exposed to any persistent condition which would seriously affect the health or safety of the occupants. Such items may include garages or sheds that have a potential for collapse, evidence of flooding or major drainage problems, and fire hazards.

Foundation:

The foundation shall be free from any evidence of major recent settling, large cracks or holes, severe leaning, large sections of crumbling brick, stone, or concrete, undermining of footings, walls, posts or slabs, and major deterioration of wood support members due to water damage or termites.

Condition of Stairs, Rails, and Porches:

All exterior stairs, rails and porches shall be sound and free from hazards to assure that their condition does not pose a danger to the tenant of tripping, or falling. Unsound or hazardous shall mean stairs, rails, porches, balconies, or decks with severe structural defects such as broken, rotting, or missing steps; absence of a handrail. Hand or guardrails are required on porches which are thirty (30) inches or more above the ground. These handrails must be thirty-six (36) to forty-two (42) inches above the floor of the porch, deck, balcony. When a handrail is installed, the accompanying balusters must be so arranged so as to not let a 4" sphere pass between them. Handrails are required when there is four (4) or more steps in a set of steps or stairway. This handrail must be installed between 34 and 38 inches above the nose of the tread.

Roof and Gutters:

A roof that is not weather tight and allows significant amounts of water to leak through to the interior of the unit is not acceptable. The absence of gutters does not fail the inspection unless there is significant structural damage due to their absence. Existing gutters and down spouts must be in good working condition.

Condition of Exterior Walls:

All exterior walls shall be sound and weather tight. Unsound or hazardous exterior walls shall include those with severe defects such as showing signs of buckling, bowing or leaning. Also those which have large cracks or falling or missing pieces of masonry, or walls that have deteriorated to the point that allows water and significant drafts to penetrate.

Chimney:

The chimney shall be in good repair without any missing bricks or mortar to assure that it is capable of safely carrying smoke, fumes and gases from the unit to the outside. Unsound or unsafe shall mean that the chimney is seriously leaning or that it shows evidence of deterioration or disintegration of its parts. Many missing bricks or mortar is a sign of disintegration of the chimney.

II. INDIVIDUAL ROOM GUIDELINES

LIVING ROOM:

Must meet all appropriate **General Rule** guidelines.

KITCHEN:

Must meet all appropriate **General Rule** guidelines

Additional Items for Kitchens

Range and Oven:

Both an oven and a range must be present and in good working order. (Regardless of whether the tenant or the owner is responsible for the appliance.) To be working, a range and oven must have all pilot lights and burners working so that burners are selflighting and all operating knobs present and functional. Note: Microwave ovens are permissible if the tenant agrees in writing to accept a microwave oven in lieu of as gas stove.

Refrigerator:

Each apartment shall have an operating refrigerator capable of maintaining stored food at a temperature which will keep it from spoiling and have some capabilities to store frozen food. In addition the following conditions shall not exist regarding the refrigerator; missing shelving, deterioration of door seals, and loose door handles.

Food Preparation and Storage Area:

Each kitchen shall have an area adequate for food preparation. If adequate counter space is not available, a table will meet this requirement. Some space must be available for storage of food, a portable storage cabinet may be use in place of fixed wall and base units.

Kitchen Sink:

Each kitchen shall have a working kitchen sink with hot and cold running water with proper drainage, including a "P-trap", attached to a public or private sewage system.

BATHROOM (ONE)

Must meet all appropriate **General Rule** guidelines.

Additional items for Bathrooms

Basin/Sink:

There must be a permanently installed wash basin with hot and cold running water attached to a properly functioning sewer system, including a "P-trap". A portable wash basin does not meet this requirement for a sink. Also, a kitchen sink may not be used the source for the bathroom basin. The wash basin does not necessarily have to be located in the bathroom.

Bathtub or Shower:

Each apartment shall have a permanently installed bathtub or shower with hot and cold running water attached to a properly functioning sewer system, including a "P-trap". The bathtub or shower does not have to be located in the same area as the rest of the bathroom. Unacceptable conditions include, low water pressure, dripping water faucets, minor leaks, cracked or chipping porcelain, slow drainage and missing or broken tile and grout.

Toilet:

Each apartment shall have a permanently installed, enclosed toilet for the exclusive private use of the tenant. (Note: This requires a lockable door on the bathroom toilet area.) Each toilet shall be connected to a properly functioning sewer system without leaks and with proper vents to prevent the escape of sewer gases.

Ventilation:

Each bathroom shall have an openable window or mechanical ventilation capabilities, or other method to prevent the accumulation of unhealthy odors and sewer gases. Windows and any other ventilation system must vent to the outside, attic or crawlspace.

BEDROOMS

Must meet all appropriate **General Rule** guidelines.

Additional items for bedrooms

Rescue Windows:

All bedrooms are required to have a window for rescue purposes. This window is provided so that a firefighter can enter the window and carry an unconscious person out through the window. The window has to be large enough so that both people can exit the window while the firefighter is wearing full protective apparel. Studies have been conducted to determine the minimum window dimensions. The bedroom rescue windows must have vertical opening no less than 24 inches, a horizontal opening no less than 20 inches, and a net openable area of at least 5.7 square feet. Also, the maximum sill height as measured from the floor or step is 44 inches.

MARSHALLTOWN BUILDING DIVISION

PLUMBING ISSUES RELATING TO RENTAL PROPERTY

At times when the Marshalltown Fire Department conducts rental inspections they encounter plumbing issues that may exceed their expertise, or be so numerous that they refer the situation to the Building Division. The Building Division is then requested to conduct a complete plumbing inspection to confirm the deficiencies. When we inspect we will be looking for the following, but not limited to these problem areas:

1. Use of improper materials for waste and water piping.
Example: Vehicle hoses or storm drainage pipe.
2. Improper or lack of traps for fixtures.
Example: No trap, double trapped, or running traps, etc.
3. Improper or lack of vents for fixtures.
Example: No vents, quick vents, etc.
4. Improper drainage of sumps.
Example: Sumps dumping into sanitary sewers.
5. Deteriorated piping or improperly installed piping.
Example: Holes in pipes, or unlicensed, do it yourself installation of plumbing. Lack of grade or fall.

Be aware that all plumbing other than maintenance work must be performed by a licensed plumber, licensed by the City of Marshalltown, and only after a plumbing permit is obtained from our office. Failure to obtain a permit and final inspection will result in a penalty.

Maintenance exceptions: Repairing of leaks, this does not include the replacement of piping, the removal of stoppages in sewer or waste pipes, or the repairing of faucets and closet tanks.

When the Fire Department refers a plumbing issue to our department they will send you a letter, please read the letter carefully. You need to contact the City Building Division within 15 days to discuss your plans to correct the problem (s).

If you have any questions please call City of Marshalltown, Building Division, (515) 754-5737

Scott A. Riemenschneider
Building Official
24 North Center Street

MARSHALLTOWN BUILDING DIVISION

GAS PIPING ISSUES RELATING TO RENTAL PROPERTY

As with plumbing issues, when the Fire Department conducts their rental inspections they may find gas piping situations that may exceed their expertise or be so numerous that they refer them to the Building Division. The Building Division is then requested to conduct a complete inspection to confirm these and any other deficiencies they may exist.

During our inspection we will be looking for the following problems, but not limited to these areas:

Improper use of appliances connectors.

Example: Connections for water heaters, furnaces, etc.

Use of improper materials for gas piping.

Example: Use of copper pipe for natural gas supply.

Improper or lack of vents for appliances.

Example: No vents or improper grade of existing vents.

Improper location of appliances.

Example: Water heaters or furnaces located in prohibited locations.

Improper installation of gas piping and/or vents.

Be aware that all gas piping in rental units must be performed by licensed heating contractor and gas fitter, licensed by the City of Marshalltown, and only after a gas permit has been obtained from our office. Failure to obtain a permit and inspection will result in a penalty.

If you receive a letter from the Fire Department regarding gas piping deficiencies, please read the letter carefully, and contact our office within 15 days to discuss your plan to correct the problems.

Please call if you have any questions regarding this issue or any other questions you may have, (515) 754-5737.

Thank You,

Scott Riemenschneider
Building Official
24 North Center Street

MARSHALLTOWN CITY ELECTRICIAN

ELECTRICAL ISSUES RELATING TO RENTAL INSPECTIONS

When the Marshalltown Fire Department conducts rental inspections they inspect all properties for electrical deficiencies. At times they will encounter electrical problems that they can not resolve or the number of deficiencies is far too numerous. When this occurs, they will contact the City Electrician and request an electrical survey or inspection.

When I conduct an electrical inspection I will be looking for the following problems, but will not be limited to this list of problems:

Improper use of drop or extension cords.

Improper overcurrent protection.

Example: Over fusing.

Open splices of cables.

Example: Splices must be contained in approved boxes, with covers.

Improper wiring of receptacles.

Example: Reversed polarity, open grounds, etc.

Suitability or proper use of materials.

Example: The improper use of indoor wiring materials for outdoor use. The improper usage of conventional wall receptacles in a floor application.

Electrical wiring that is deteriorated or improperly installed.

Be aware that all electrical wiring in a rental unit, in the City of Marshalltown, must be completed by a licensed electrician, licensed by the City. Failure to use a licensed electrician or obtain a permit prior to repairs or calling for a final inspection will result in a penalty.

If you receive a letter from the Fire Department regarding electrical deficiencies please read the letter carefully and contact my office within 15 days to discuss your plans to correct the problems. If you have any questions regarding this or other electrical issues please contact me at, 515-754-5761.

Thank You,

John Phillips
City Electrician
24 N. Center Street