



Guidelines for

Property Maintenance Inspections

FUNDAMENTALS

The mission of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) is to ensure buildings and individual units are in healthy and safe conditions. DCRA needs you, the tenant, to report your suspected housing violations.

DC HOUSING CODE STANDARDS/REQUIREMENTS

District of Columbia laws require landlords to provide apartments that are in a safe, habitable and livable condition. The landlord has a duty to make all repairs necessary to make buildings and apartments habitable. DC law also requires landlords to maintain buildings and apartments according to many established standards.

SCHEDULING A HOUSING INSPECTION

If you feel your rental unit or building does not comply with the DC Housing Code, the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) recommends you take the following actions to identify necessary repairs:

1. Write out a list of code violations using the Housing Code Standards or the more detailed regulations in Title 14 of the DC Municipal Regulations to determine what must be repaired.
2. Make one list of violations for your apartment and another list of violations for common areas such as the hallways, stairs, yard, etc. Sign and date any lists you make.
3. Preserve physical evidence of violations (including photographs of dead insects, rats, or mice) to show to the DCRA housing inspector. Try to bring a witness with you for complaints.
4. All requests for repairs should be sent in writing to the landlord, resident manager, or rental office asking them to make the repairs. Keep a copy of every letter or note you write and make a list of all calls, letters, and meetings along with the date and time they occurred. Send the letters certified mail, return receipt, and/or obtain a receipt from the landlord for delivery of letters, if possible.
5. When calling the landlord, make certain you obtain the name of the person who takes your complaint. Keep a calendar or other written notes which include when the problems started, when the landlord was contacted, what was done in response to the complaint, and when and if the repairs were completed.
6. If you receive no response to your complaint or the repairs are not made, invite the landlord or resident manager to meet with you or the tenant organization to discuss the violations and repairs.

If property management still does not respond, you should request a housing inspection. The DCRA Inspections Scheduling Unit is available from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm Monday through Wednesday and Friday (Thursday 9:30am until 4:30pm) by calling directly on **(202) 442-9557 option 6**.

An inspection will usually be scheduled within a week but an inspector can respond sooner in emergencies. Remember to keep a copy of every letter or note and make a list of all calls, letters, and meetings along with the date and time they occurred.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TENANTS

The D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR) 14, chapter 8, section 802, states the following:

- The part of the premises that the tenant occupies and uses be kept clean and sanitary
- The tenant shall not willfully or wantonly destroy, deface, damage, impair, or remove any part of the structure or dwelling unit as the conditions of the premises permit.

Failure to comply with the regulations could result in the tenant being cited for violations.

HOUSING CONDITIONS CALENDAR COURT

DCRA has an assigned Housing Code Inspector who conducts inspections mandated by Judge John Ramsey Johnson of the DC Superior Court, so in the event a landlord/responsible party has not made repairs to a rental, the Housing Conditions Calendar allows tenants to sue landlords for D.C. Housing Code violations on an expedited basis.

Cases on the Housing Condition Calendar will have the first hearing scheduled less than a month after the suit is filed and the DCRA housing code inspector schedules the inspection giving the tenant a date and a time of the inspection the same week.

For more information on Housing Conditions Calendar, please follow the link to the DC Superior Court website at dccourts.gov/internet/public/aud_civil/housingconditionscaj.jsf.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE INSIDE THE APARTMENT

Bathrooms: A bathroom must be private and ventilated. It must have a bathtub or shower, toilet, sink with hot (at least 120 degrees) and cold running water, and it must have a waterproof floor and wall base.

Cleanliness: Apartments must be free of insects, rats, and mice. Apartments must also be free of dirt, dust, cobwebs, garbage, and litter at the time of move-in. Tenants are responsible for keeping their apartments clean after they move in.

Insects: Insects such as roaches, ants, water bugs, etc. are prohibited.

Doors: Doors must not be blocked, must open and close easily (particularly emergency exits and fire doors), and must fit reasonably well within their frame. Knobs and locks must be in good working condition.

Electricity: Each apartment or house must have two separate electrical outlets per habitable room (one of which must be a wall or floor convenience outlet), wires with good insulation, and correct fuses.

Fire Safety: Lighted fire exit signs, fire extinguishers, and a fire alarm system.

Floors: Floors must be clean, sound, waterproof, and level. Cracks, holes, splinters, and rat or mouse holes are prohibited.

Heat: If a tenant cannot control heat settings within the unit, the landlord must insure heating equipment maintains the temperature at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and 65 degrees Fahrenheit at night in all occupied rooms and bathrooms.

Hot Water: The minimum requirement for water temperature shall be 110 degrees and no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the kitchen and bathroom.

Kitchens: All facilities provided by the landlord for cooking, storage, or refrigeration of food must be maintained in a safe and good working condition. The kitchen sink must have hot and cold running water.

Paint: Paint must not be peeling or flaking and must not contain exposed lead paint.

Plumbing: Leaky plumbing is prohibited. Each apartment must have hot and cold running water in the kitchen and bathroom.

Privacy: Each apartment must have a door to an outside hallway or the street. Bathrooms must permit privacy; tenants must be able to get to the bathroom and bedrooms without going through another bathroom or bedroom.

Security: Tenants must be able to lock the apartment from both the outside and inside. Building entrances must have locks.

Space: At least 70 square feet is required for each room used for sleeping by one tenant over 1 year old. For rooms used by 2 or more tenants for sleeping, there must be an additional 50 square feet for each tenant. Under the D.C. Human Rights Act (not the Housing Code), it may be considered unlawful discrimination if a landlord tries to evict a family with children in order to limit the number of tenants living in the apartment. For purposes of the Human Rights Act, in general up to 2 persons are allowed in an efficiency apartment; 3 persons in a one bedroom, 5 persons in a two bedroom, and 7 persons in a three bedroom.

Stairs: Stairs must be firm and secure with good railings and good lighting. Obstructions are prohibited.

Walls & Ceilings: Holes, wide cracks, or peeling paint, plaster, or wallpaper is prohibited.

Windows: Windows must have screens from March 15 to November 15. Windows must open and close easily, must contain glass without cracks or holes, and must be without air or water leaks.

TYPICAL HOUSING VIOLATIONS: INTERNAL



- Hardwired smoke detector
- Cleanliness
- Infestation (bugs, roaches)
- Broken fixtures
- Property neglect



PROPERTY MAINTENANCE OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT

Cleanliness: All walkways must be free of dirt, garbage, litter, rats, mice, and insects. The grass must be cut.

Foundation: The foundation must have sound joints between the bricks and stones. Holes and cracks are prohibited.

Porches: Porches must have safe and secure floors and railings.

Roof: The roof must have gutters, drains, and down spouts that do not leak.

Stairs & Steps: Stairs and steps must be evenly spaced with railings. Tripping hazards or obstructions are prohibited. Trash: Waterproof plastic or metal covered trash cans must be provided. Grounds and walkways must be free of junk, trash, and litter.

Walkways: Walkways must be free of obstructions and trash. Holes in the sidewalk are not permitted.

Walls: Walls must be waterproof and clean. Holes, cracks, and mouse or rat holes are not permitted.

Water: Flooding in yards, walkways, basements are not permitted.

TYPICAL HOUSING VIOLATIONS: EXTERNAL



- Cleanliness
- Trash & debris
- Vegetative growth (high grass)
- Stairs/Steps/Walkways
- Walls/Gutters

