

**DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS  
INSPECTIONS AND ENFORCEMENT DIVISION  
NEW RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION CHECKLIST  
410-313-1830**

**PLEASE NOTE THIS CHECKLIST IS MERELY A GUIDE CONTAINING MOST COMMONLY FAILED ITEMS, AND IS NOT AN ALL-INCLUSIVE LIST:**

- SMOKE ALARMS BATTERY ONLY (NO WIRES)** – All **removable battery powered only** smoke alarms (those not connected to the buildings AC electrical wiring), must be replaced with **NEW** 10-year **non-removable or sealed-in** lithium battery smoke alarms. Smoke alarms **MUST** be installed on every level of the home. Additionally, a smoke alarm **MUST** be installed in the hallway outside of and adjacent to the bedrooms **AND**, a smoke alarm must be installed **inside** of each bedroom. Always install smoke alarms in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions. The date of manufacture is on the bottom (wall side) of the smoke alarm, they cannot be more than 10 years old. **PLEASE SAVE THE PACKAGING FOR THE RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTOR.**
- SMOKE ALARMS ELECTRIC (HAS WIRES)** – Hardwired smoke alarms (those connected to electrical wiring of the house) The entire alarm **MUST** be replaced if they are more than 10 years old. The date of manufacture is on the bottom (wall side) of the smoke alarm. If there is no date, it is more than 10 years old and must be replaced. Never replace electric hardwired smoke alarms with battery powered only smoke alarms. Hardwired smoke alarms must always be replaced with **NEW** hardwired smoke alarms. Hardwired smoke alarms are still allowed to have a removeable backup battery; however, electrically hardwired smoke alarms with a non-removable 10-year battery are beginning to be available on the market. Install smoke alarms in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Smoke alarms must be installed on every level of the home, inside of each bedroom and in the outside hallway adjacent to the bedrooms. **PLEASE SAVE THE PACKAGING FOR THE RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTOR.**
- CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS** – Effective April 1, 2018, a new Maryland State Law (Call 1-800-525-3124 with questions) goes into effect that requires all rental properties to install carbon monoxide alarms (CO) be installed outside of each sleeping area and on every level to include the basement in a building/home that contains any fuel burning equipment, wood burning appliance or has an enclosed attached garage. Carbon monoxide alarms can be hardwired with a battery backup or battery powered with a ten-year battery with a sealed tamper resistant compartment. The State recommends that affected properties replace the current hard-wired smoke alarms with a combination smoke alarm/carbon monoxide alarm unit. Carbon Monoxide Alarms should be installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. **PLEASE SAVE THE PACKAGING FOR THE RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTOR.**
- CLEAN AND SANITARY CONDITION** – Your dwelling unit and any storage sheds or buildings, detached garages, fences and gates, etc. must be in good repair. The living unit must be clean and sanitary when the inspector arrives. All repairs and renovations should be fully completed in a workmanlike manner and all tools, materials, and debris removed from the premises. The yard must be free of trash and debris.
- FIREPLACES** – Level 1 Inspection required on masonry (wood burning) fireplaces. If it is a masonry fireplace, wood burning fireplace or woodstove, you must have proof of chimney flue cleaning within the last 12 months. Report provided must indicate the fireplace or woodstove is safe to use for its intended use. **PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OF SAME.**
- WELL/SEPTIC SERVED PROPERTIES** - If your property does get its potable (drinking) water from a well, you must have your water tested for potability to ensure it is safe for tenants to drink (Test for: Nitrates, Coliforms and Bacteria). You must provide the Inspector with a recent copy of this report indicating that the water is free from contamination prior to approval of the license. Provide documentation indicating septic was pumped within last 3-years.
- OCCUPANCY LIMITATIONS - Bedrooms** – Every bedroom occupied by one person shall contain at least 70 square feet of floor area, and every bedroom occupied by more than one person shall contain at least 50 square feet of floor area for each occupant thereof. Living Room – 3 to 5 occupants must have a minimum of 120 square feet, 6 or more occupants must have a minimum of 150 square feet. Dining Room – 3 to 5 occupants must have a minimum of 80 square feet, 6 or more occupants must have 200 square feet. Combined living room and dining room spaces - If the total area is equal to that required for separate rooms and if the space is located so as to function as a combination living/dining room. *There are additional requirements for efficiency Apartment units whose maximum occupancy is 3 persons.*
- HOT WATER HEATER** – Check to ensure temperature and pressure relief valve is piped down to the floor not more than 6 inches above floor level or piped into sump pump pit or other approved termination. Check venting if gas fired. Assure clearances. New State Law effective April 1, 2018 requires the installation of Carbon Monoxide Alarms if appliances are gas fired.
- WASHER/DRYER** – (if provided) – Check the hookups and turn them on a short cycle to ensure there are no leaks and they are in working order. The dryer should be vented to the exterior or as per manufacturer’s instructions. **Flexible exhaust duct must be metallic/metal and not plastic.**

- ❑ **ELECTRICAL PANEL BOX** – Check for tripped breakers, missing spacers or breakers providing access to the interior buss bar. A minimum clear space (30” in width and 36” in front) must be left open at the electrical panel.
- ❑ **ELECTRICAL SERVICE CABLE** – Property owners are responsible for maintaining the electrical service entrance cable to the home. The large electrical wire from the 1<sup>st</sup> connection point at building all the way to the electric meter. If this cable is in disrepair (wire covering deteriorating), it must be replaced by a licensed electrician, under permit.
- ❑ **FURNACE** – Forced air, heat pump or other forced air type unit, check for filter, if visible, is it clean. If gas fired, check condition of flue pipe for holes, rust, is connection tight, clearance to combustible materials usually 18 inches on single wall flue. Last service invoice is important to note/provide.
- ❑ **HOT WATER BOILER** – May provide domestic hot water in addition to heat, boiler circulates hot water through a system of pipes and radiators and baseboard heating units. Look for a temperature and pressure relief valve; it must be piped down to within 6 – 8 inches of floor level. The unit should be serviced annually.
- ❑ **ROOMS ON ALL FLOORS** – Check perimeter of room (floors/ceilings) for water damage, i.e., stains or suspected mold, check electrical outlets quantity and use an outlet tester on random outlets; **OUTLETS CANNOT BE PAINTED OVER**. Painted outlets must be replaced and cannot be cleaned. Note how many bedrooms.
- ❑ **BASEMENT** – Check for window meeting egress requirements in basement if there is a bedroom in the basement (No more than 44 in. above floor, window min. clear opening 5.7 sq. ft.; min. 20 in. wide, min. 24 in. high). Check for signs of leaks at foundation, exterior door, areaway or flooring above.
- ❑ **BATHROOM/POWDER ROOM** – Check for ventilation fan exhausted to the exterior or openable window; check bathtub/shower tiles for loose tiles and proper caulking at wall and tub as well as where the tub meets the floor; check floors to ensure they are impervious to water and have no loose or missing tiles; flush toilets, run water in bathroom lavatories (basin), check for hot water at faucet; check under the vanity cabinet for any water leaks or signs of previous water leaks, and all caulking is in good condition; toilet seats should be hard surface.
- ❑ **ALL ROOMS** – Check to ensure that all switch plates and duplex outlet covers are installed, check for open (exposed wires) electrical junction boxes. Ensure that receptacles are not painted. Check for holes in walls, floors and ceilings. Ensure there is no peeling paint. Close and lock and reopen all interior doors for fit and operation. Must be clean and sanitary.
- ❑ **WINDOWS** – Check windows to ensure there are locks on all first-floor windows (with a sill height of 6 ft. or less from ground), and window functions properly. Windows must be able to remain open (held in place with their own hardware) without slamming shut. Ensure window screens are in place, tight fitting and free of holes.
- ❑ **SPRINKLERS** – If the house has a sprinkler system (for fire suppression), check sprinkler heads for clearance requirements and ensure that no heads are painted or damaged. Ask for a copy of the last sprinkler report (in multi-family buildings). If residential sprinkler system in single family dwelling, no report may be available; however, the backflow device is to be inspected annually and replaced every 5 years.
- ❑ **KITCHEN** – Run water in sink and check for leaks under the sink, check garbage disposal for operation and proper electrical connection; check inside stove to ensure it is clean and sanitary. Turn on stove and burners to ensure they are in working order; check stove hood fan and light for operation; look inside dishwasher to ensure it is clean and sanitary; turn on dishwasher to ensure it is working properly if you suspect it is not; look inside cabinet doors for signs of roach infestation and ensure they are clean and sanitary; look inside refrigerator (if provided) for clean sanitary condition free of odors; dishwasher is attached to under counter; drawers do not pull out all the way and are attached on drawer rails; cabinets and counter surfaces are not delaminated or damaged.
- ❑ **STAIRWAYS (INSIDE/OUTSIDE)** – Check to ensure handrails are in place and secured if there are four risers or more. Metal handrails must not be rusted or have peeling and flaking paint.
- ❑ **EXTERIOR** – Check to ensure that gutters and downspouts are not crushed or clogged and are free of overhanging branches. Since it is hard to determine the condition of a gutter from the ground, look for plant/weed growth which is a sure sign it is clogged up; splash blocks should be in place at the termination of the downspout; look for green discoloration on siding which is a sign that gutters and downspouts are not functional; look for large areas of moss growth near foundation wall-this may indicate standing water; look for areas where topsoil is missing exposing stones/pebbles; ensure that globes are on all exterior light fixtures (all exit doors require a light); ensure there are no holes in the exterior that would allow nuisance animals to enter; ensure there is no rotted wood trim or cracking or peeling paint; visually look at roof covering for signs of deterioration (note any clawing shingles or missing shingles); check fences and/or gates to ensure they are structurally sound and hardware is in place on all gates; ensure that sliding doors work properly and screen slider is secure; if the house has a deck, check it to ensure it has proper railings and is structurally sound; check sidewalks/steps for tripping hazards.

- **PREMISES IDENTIFICATION – ADDRESS NUMBERS MUST BE POSTED IN A POSITION TO BE PLAINLY LEGIBLE AND VISIBLE FROM THE STREET OR ROAD FRONTING THE PROPERTY.** These numbers shall contrast with their background. Numbers shall be a minimum of 4 inches high with a minimum stroke width of 0.5 inch.
- **DEADBOLT LOCKS** – Doors providing access to the unit shall be equipped with a deadbolt lock designed to be readily operable from the side from which egress is to be made without the need for keys, special knowledge or effort and shall have a lock throw of not less than 1 inch. For this purpose, a sliding bolt shall not be considered an acceptable deadbolt lock. **ALL DOUBLE-KEYED DEADBOLTS MUST BE REPLACED WITH APPROPRIATE LOCK.**
- **LEAD PAINT** - Pursuant to Title 6, Subtitle 8, of the Environmental Article, Annotated Code of Maryland and the Howard County Property Maintenance Code, Section 305.3.1, please be aware if your property was built prior to 1978, regardless of renovation history, a Maryland Department of the Environment Lead Paint Risk Reduction Certificate (Form 330), Lead Free or Limited Lead Free Certificate must be on file with our office in order to maintain your rental license for Howard County. This office does not have access to State records if you have already obtained one.

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