

Landlord Notice

Effective December 29, 2024: Sealed Batteries Required for All Battery-Powered Smoke Detectors

HUD has released new requirements for inspections of Section 8 housing units, called the **National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE)**. This rule replaces the current Housing Quality Standards (HQS) for Section 8 housing units.



Belmont will be implementing these standards starting January 1, 2025.

HUD released the final rule for NSPIRE on May 11, 2023. Under this rule, NSPIRE establishes a new approach to defining and assessing housing quality (PIH Notice 2023-28). The purpose of NSPIRE is to ensure that residents of HUD housing, including Section 8 tenants, live in safe, habitable dwellings. NSPIRE also ensures that items and components inside and outside structures, and within units, are functionally adequate, operable, and free of health and safety hazards.

Benefits for Landlords:

- **Increased inspection consistency**
- **Ability to contribute input to standards**
- **Access to inspection data**
- **Reliable data and presentable reports for portfolio management and risk assessment**

NSPIRE Standards and Deficiencies

There are 63 standards under NSPIRE, each with a list of deficiencies categorized by severity: Low, Moderate, Severe, and Life-Threatening.

- **Life-Threatening (LT):** High risk of death; must be corrected within 24 hours.

- **Severe:** High risk of permanent disability, serious injury, or illness; must be corrected within 30 days.
- **Moderate:** Moderate risk of adverse medical events or compromised safety; must be corrected within 30 days.
- **Low:** Critical to habitability but not a substantive health or safety risk; considered a “pass” with no correction timeframe.

If deficiencies are not corrected within the required timeframe, the PHA must initiate HAP Contract enforcement, which can include withholding or abatement of assistance payments, terminations, or relocations.

NSPIRE Standard Highlight: Smoke Alarms

Fire safety is critical for ensuring safe, habitable dwellings. The smoke alarm standard includes three Life-Threatening deficiencies that must be corrected within 24 hours.

- **Installation Requirements:**
 - High on walls or ceilings (greater than 4 inches from the wall if on the ceiling; 4-12 inches from the ceiling if on the wall).
 - At least 10 feet away from cooking appliances.
 - Not near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere.
 - Not painted or decorated.
- **Locations:**
 - On each level of the unit.
 - Inside each bedroom.
 - Within 21 feet of any bedroom door.
 - On the living area side of doors separating bedrooms from living areas.
- **Battery Requirements:**
 - Must use sealed batteries lasting the lifetime of the alarm (10 years).

Deficiencies Under the Smoke Alarm Standard:

Deficiency 1: The Smoke Alarm Is Not Installed Where Required

This is categorized as Life-Threatening and must be corrected within 24 hours. This deficiency applies to both Unit and Inside inspection areas when:

- The smoke alarm is not installed inside each bedroom *and*
- The smoke alarm is not installed outside the bedroom *and*
- The smoke alarm is not installed on each level.

Deficiency 2: The Smoke Alarm Is Obstructed

This is categorized as Life-Threatening and must be corrected within 24 hours. This deficiency applies to both Unit and Inside inspection areas when the smoke alarm is covered by a foreign object including, but not limited to a plastic bag, shower cap, zip tie, paint, or paint tape.

Deficiency 3: The Smoke Alarm Does Not Produce an Audio or Visual Alarm When Tested

This is categorized as Life-Threatening and must be corrected within 24 hours. This deficiency applies to both Unit and Inside inspection areas when the smoke alarm does not produce an audio or visual alarm when tested. This also applies when the alarm does not cease after testing.

Additional Resources for NSPIRE:

Visit HUD's NSPIRE webpage, where you will find all notices, regulations, tips, and can sign up for their NSPIRE Newsletter.

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac/nspire/notices