

OREGON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

NSPIRE-Through the Lens of OHCS Inspectors




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Tina Esther, tina.ester@hcs.oregon.gov Senior Physical Compliance Analyst
 Allen McCart, allen.mccart@hcs.oregon.gov Portfolio Manager


Class Agenda


- History of NSPIRE
- NSPIRE versus UPCS Protocol
- Scoring Methodology: REAC versus OHCS
- REAC versus OHCS Inspectors
- Inspectable Areas and Level of Deficiencies
- Common Findings
- Tips to prepare for OHCS/REAC inspection with new NSPIRE Standards
- Questions




NSPIRE/UPCS History-Timeline


- UPCS: Implemented in Sept. 1998
- NSPIRE: Demonstration phase: 2019-2022
- Conducted: 2300 Multi Family Units and 9,200 Voucher Units
- **NSPIRE: Oct. 1, 2023-Live**




Updated Protocol.... Why?: 

- **UPCS: Five Inspectable Areas**
- Purpose:
 - Focused on the appearance of the property and less on resident safety.
 - 35% of the score on the inspection was based on the units.



Updated Protocol.... Why?: 

- **NSPIRE: Three Inspectable Areas**
- Purpose:
 - Turn the inspection focus to the units.
 - Focus on ensuring safe, habitable, and functional housing prioritizing resident health and safety over aesthetics.
 - Up to 85% of the total score is based on the units.



Updated Protocol.... Why? Continued.

NSPIRE:

Focus:

- Emphasizes the actual condition of the units.
- Priority placed on Life-Threatening conditions: Smoke detectors, fire safety, and electrical hazards, etc.
- Encourages year-round maintenance versus prepping to pass an inspection.
- Eliminates the inspector subjectively. Clear Protocol.

Scoring Methodology: REAC-NSPIRE

REAC: Maximum 100 points

- Failing score **59 or below.**
- **Lose more than 30 points in units, automatic failure.**
- 90-100 Three Year Cycle
- 80-89 Two Year Cycle
- 70-79 or 60-69 One Year Cycle

• **Scores between 59-60 Fail and will round down.**

Non-Scoring : REAC-NSPIRE Extension October 2026

- Fire-labeled doors
- Guardrails
- Electrical GFCI/AFCI
- HVAC
- Interior Lighting
- Minimum Electrical and Lighting

Provides the property owners additional time to bring properties into compliance.

Scoring Methodology: OHCS-NSPIRE


OHCS: Rating is based on established rating criteria not a numeric score.

- Two Ratings: Meets or Does not Meet

• **Rating Highlights:**

1. **>50%** of inspected inside/outside or the units inspected have two or more findings.
2. Communication

• Notes are included on the closing letter indicating more information about the specific issue(s) that may have led to the rating decision.



How are REAC and OHCS Inspectors Similar

- Follow the **exact** same NSPIRE protocol

This is where the similarities END... We are your **PARTNER**.



REAC Inspectors



- Follow Script 28-day notice
- They are not tied to the property.
- Contractor not from this area-HUD.
- One-time Inspection.
- Lack of communication during inspection.

OHCS Inspectors

- Portfolio Management Staff- 15-day notice
- Interact and educate property staff.
- Visit property at least every three years.
- View Property as a long-term Asset.
- Personal Involvement- Buy-in-Partners.
- Contact Inspector for any property questions.



Three Areas of Inspection following NSPIRE Standards for Inspection



INSIDE= COMMON AREAS (OFFICE, LAUNDRY, STAIRWELLS, SOME BUILDING SYSTEMS, ETC.)



OUTSIDE= BUILDING EXTERIOR & SITE, SIDING, ROOFING, FENCES, TRIPPING HAZARDS, ETC.)



UNIT=THE TENANTS LIVING SPACE



ALL COMPONENTS THAT EXIST ON A PROPERTY THAT ARE IN PLACE FOR ACTIVE SERVICE MUST FUNCTION AS DESIGNED, OR THEY ARE EVALUATED AS DEFICIENT UNDER THE NSPIRE PROTOCOL.

NSPIRE Changes....Be Ready

THREE LEVELS OF DEFICIENCIES



Severe: Will generate "emergency" work orders (24-hour repair) some will be categorized as Life-Threatening.

Moderate: Will produce "routine" maintenance requirements (30-day repair)

Low: Will produce "discretionary" maintenance needs (60-day repair)

OHCS combines 30- and 60-day repairs all will be required to be repaired within 45 days.



The Most Common: Severe and Life-Threatening Deficiencies

- GFCI's inoperable or missing where required.
- Call-For-Aid system/cord blocked or greater than 6" from the floor.
- Blocked or inoperable emergency or fire exits.
- Fire doors that are propped open or will not latch.
- TRP discharge pipe has upward slope or made of the incorrect materials.
- Expired or missing tags on fire extinguishers.
- Inoperative/missing/improperly installed smoke detectors.



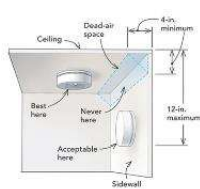
Common Physical Findings

- Inadequate heater clearance
- Emergency Exit Lights



Common Physical Findings Continued:

- Inoperable or missing ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI's)
- Inoperable or improperly installed smoke detectors



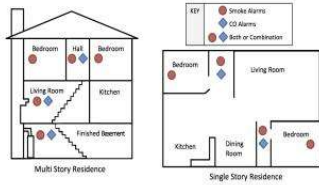
Smoke Detectors

- At least one 10-yr or sealed lithium battery-operated or hard-wired smoke detector.
 - a. On each level of the unit
 - b. Inside each bedroom
 - c. Within 21 feet of any door to a bedroom measured along a path of travel.
 - d. Where a smoke detector is installed outside a bedroom is separated from an adjacent area by a door a detector must also be installed on the living area side of door.



Carbon Monoxide Placement

- Must meet carbon monoxide detection standards established through the Federal Register notice.



Common Physical Findings Continued:

- Debris in the gutters
- Fire door Closures-no kickstands or wedges.
- Inoperable self-closing hardware



Common Physical Findings Continued:

- Bathroom stoppers missing or inoperable (Tub and Sink)
- Hot water discharge tube length or made of improper material or upward slope



Common Physical Findings Continued:

- Call-For-Aid cord is tied up or blocked
- Grab Bars in bathroom only



Inside Pictures

- Exit Light hanging and exposed wires.
- Mold-like substance



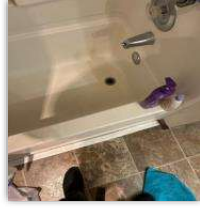
Inside Pictures

- Elevator fire door will not latch
- Missing GFCI protection within 6 feet of water source



Unit Pictures

- Smoke detector improper installation
- Bathtub stopper is missing



Outside Pictures

- Wall mounted light missing globe
- Sidewalk trip hazard more than 3/4" vertical deviation



Outside: Guardrails

- Required for elevated heights of 30 inches or more.
- Rails must be 30 inches tall.



36" tall landing missing guardrail



Outside: Handrails

- One railing for steps- Four steps requires a railing.
- Two railings required for ramps.
- Height between 28-42 inches.
- Ramp 6 inches tall or 6 feet long needs handrail.
- Reasonably grasped.



Outside: Soffit and Fascia

- Penetrating hole
- Damage causing instability



Tips to Prepare for OHCS Inspection with the New NSPIRE Standards

Prior to the inspection date, the property should conduct a complete (100%) inspection of the property. It should include the site, all building exteriors, all building systems, all common areas and all units.

For clarification purposes, all areas within a building that are not residential units are considered inside for the inspection, and you will need to provide access to each of these areas.

Current Building Certificates Required

- Fire Extinguishers
- Boilers
- Fire Alarm
- Building Sprinkler System
- Elevator
- Lead Based Paint Report and Resident Disclosure if the property has a building built prior to 1978

Physical Inspection Prep Work

While preparing for the inspection, keep in mind that if an inspectable item exists on your property, it must function as designed by the manufacturer; i.e. Garbage Disposals, sink pop-up, etc.

Ensure that all residents are provided appropriate notice and that the notice is for the entire day – 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – to allow flexibility in the schedule.

Don't Forget About Curb Appeal

Ensure all litter is removed

Remove all graffiti

Curb appeal – mow grass, bark beds are weed free

Dumpster appearance – clean area, not overflowing, enclosure well maintained

Entry sign is in good repair and visible from 20 ft

Inspection Day Protocol

- The property staff must enter the building/unit first and accompany the inspector throughout the units. **Never leave OHCS alone in a unit.**
- Inspection is conducted left to right.
- Property staff will turn on ovens including burners, bake, and broil for inspector.

Inspection Day Protocol

- Property staff will open blinds, windows, and test smoke detectors if asked by inspector.
- While conducting an inspection an inspector is not to open closed doors within a unit.
- The property representative is required to provide the inspector with access to all inspectable areas within the sample units and sample building common areas. **Have keys ready.**

Inspection Day Protocol

- For any inaccessible areas: Management will be asked to provide a certification indicating that they had accessed the unit and inspected it later.
- The property representative should carry a notepad with them during the inspection to document the various findings when appropriate.

Inspection Day Protocol- Continued

- You should not schedule the maintenance/service of any inspectable items the day of the inspection.
- Pay attention while the inspection is being conducted. The inspector will call out all deficiencies discovered during the inspection.

***Creating an internal list of deficiencies will help Management staff get started on correcting items that will be in the report.**



Sample Size

- Generally, sample size is based on inspecting 20% of units at the property.
- In addition, any unit that has been **vacant longer than 30 days and is rent ready will be inspected.**
- For Assisted Living Facilities (ALF's) the property is allowed to select the 5 units to inspect.
- Other programs may require more units: HOME/HTF and LHTC

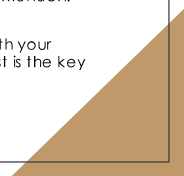


#01 Mistake during the Physical Review that affects the property rating.

Communicate:

Responding late to requests for pre-inspection information or inspection response and not requesting an extension.

Communication with your Compliance Analyst is the key to success.



Always Remember



- Do not forget to notice tenants for physical inspections.
- Do not forget to train employees on inspection procedure/protocol.
- Do not report all items as corrected if they are not corrected.
- Do not submit late or incomplete pre-inspection or response information.



Always Remember Continued:

- Do not forget to ask for an extension before the response or information is due.
- Do not blame issues found on previous Staff, Management Company or Owners.
- Communicate challenges when issues are related to previous management.



Tips to Improve Rating

- Train employees or yourself on rating criteria and program funding requirements.
- Make sure you have an updated Administrative Notebook on site.
- Notice **ALL** tenants for inspections and for **ALL** day.
- Perform a pre-inspection of physical areas (ask someone else to look at your property as well).
- Make sure you are timely with submitting information requests and responses.



#01 Tip for Improving Inspection Rating

Communicate with OHCS- this includes:

- Be honest and open about problems that have occurred.
- Explain situations
- Ask for extensions
- Take Responsibility for mishaps.
- Explain plan for resolving any issues.
- Explain plan of action to lessen the occurrence of repeat findings.

We are all human and OHCS wants to be considered a partner and not a nuisance. We have seen it all.....We can help!

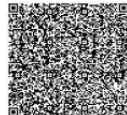


NSPIRE- QR Codes/Links

• OHCS Inspection Scoring Criteria:
<https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/compliance-monitoring/pages/regulatory-inspection-ratings.aspx>



• HUD NSPIRE Protocol and Training Links:
<https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/compliance-monitoring/pages/affordable-rental-housing-site-inspection-standards.aspx>



QR Codes/Links

HUD NSPIRE Standards
<https://www.hud.gov/rear/nspire-standards>



NSPIRE Inspection Checklist
<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfs/files/PIH/documents/NSPIRE%20HCV%20Table%20Checklist.pdf>