

Understanding NSPIRE: Key Features and Requirements

What is NSPIRE?

The National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate, or NSPIRE, introduces a new inspection model for HUD-assisted housing, designed to unify and clarify the inspection process. It concentrates on 3 inspectable areas:



Outside

The building's exterior, site, and external systems



Inside

The common areas and building systems inside the building but not in the Unit



Unit

The interior living space inhabited by the participant family

NSPIRE aims to make inspections more objective and uniform across all programs, offering more precise and detailed standards that reduce confusion for both inspectors and property owners.

3 Categories of Deficiencies

NSPIRE prioritizes the health and safety of residents by citing 3 categories of deficiencies:



Health and Safety - A risk that poses potential danger to residents



Function and Operability - Eliminates or critically reduces an object's usability but is not likely to directly harm a residents



Condition and Appearance - Inspectable items do not meet reasonable expectations of condition and appearance or are damaged

Health and Safety Determinations

Deficiencies are labeled with health and safety determinations depending on their level of severity. These determinations include:

- o **Life-Threatening** - A high risk of death or severe illness or injury to a resident
- o **Severe** - A high risk of permanent disability, serious injury, or illness to a resident
- o **Moderate** - A moderate risk of a healthcare visit; temporary harm; or if left untreated, worsen a chronic condition
- o **Low** - Critical to habitability but not presenting a substantive health or safety risk to residents

Repair Time Frames

The health and safety determination of a deficiency impacts the time frame in which it must be repaired. Repair times also differ across housing programs.

If a deficiency is not corrected within this time frame, the PHA must initiate enforcement actions, which may include abatement of housing assistance payments, termination, or relocation.



Affirmative Habitability Requirements

The affirmative habitability requirements are HUD's minimum standards for safe, habitable dwellings. All units must have:



Hot and cold running water



Smoke Alarms



A working bathroom with a sink, toilet, and bathtub or shower



Permanently-installed light fixtures in kitchens and bathrooms

Major Changes Introduced by NSPIRE

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

New requirements for installation, type, location, and number of alarms

Mold-Like Substance

New process that requires equipment for detecting elevated moisture levels and mold-like substances

Handrails/Guardrails

New repair time frames and other requirements, such as handrails along both sides of certain ramps

Infestations

More than just roaches and bedbugs—new inspection process and repair times (e.g., extensive infestations)

Electrical Outlets

Outlets that are located Outside and accessible must be inspected and protected by a GFCI outlet or breaker

Implications for Landlords and Residents

Landlords

Property owners must ensure compliance with the new NSPIRE standards.

This may require reviewing maintenance routines and addressing any identified deficiencies before scheduled inspections.

Familiarity with the standards will allow for smoother inspections.

Residents

Assisted units will be inspected according to the NSPIRE standards to ensure decent, safe, and sanitary housing.

Residents should keep their Unit in good condition and request maintenance as soon as repairs are needed.

The NSPIRE compliance date for the Housing Choice Voucher Program is **October 1, 2025**.

Smoke Alarms

A smoke alarm is a self-contained device that detects the presence of smoke and produces an audio or visual signal to alert of a possible fire.

All deficiencies listed under the Smoke Alarm Standard are **Life-Threatening** and must be corrected in **24 hours**.



Smoke alarms must not be damaged, painted, or covered by decorations. All alarms must be hard-wired or have a 10-year sealed battery.

Installation

Smoke alarms are required:

- On each level of the building AND the Unit
- Inside each sleeping room
- Outside each sleeping room
- In living areas separated from bedrooms by a door

Requirements for where a smoke alarm must be installed are precise and depend on placement. These requirements include:

- If mounted on a ceiling, must be at least 4 inches away from the wall
- If mounted on the wall, must be between 4–12 inches from the ceiling
- If near a cooking appliance, must be at least 10 feet away
- If outside a bedroom, must be installed within 21 feet of the door

Alarms cannot be installed near duct openings, windows, or where drafts might interfere with operation.

Available Resources

Scan to see
the NSPIRE
standards



To learn more about NSPIRE requirements, visit these resources:



[NSPIRE Standards](#)



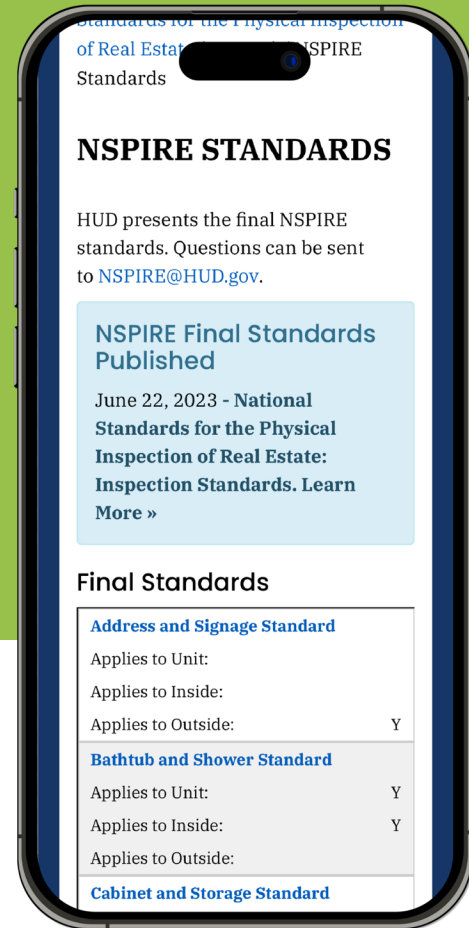
[NSPIRE Information Page](#)



[NSPIRE Final Rule](#)



[HCV Inspection Checklist](#)



- [NSPIRE Webinars and Webcasts](#)
- [88 FR 30442 - Economic Growth Regulator Relief and Consumer Protection Act: NSPIRE](#)
- [NSPIRE Inspection 101](#)
- [PIH Notice 2023-28](#)
- [NSPIRE Inspection Videos](#)
- [Inspecting Heating Types Job Aid](#)
- [Inspecting Different Building Types Job Aid](#)
- [NSPIRE Inspections: Landlord Resources](#)
- [NSPIRE Inspections: Resident Resources](#)
- [HUD's Lead-Based Paint Visual Assessment Course](#)