



City of Rochester

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Property Inspection Checklist Guide

The intent of the City of Rochester's Property Inspection Program is to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens. We hope this guide will assist property owners, renters, property managers, and other interested persons in understanding the inspection program. This guide follows the "Rental Property Owner Self Inspection Form" and is to be used by all rental property owners during self-inspection of rental units. If you have any questions regarding any of the standards or need assistance with the self inspection please contact the Fire Department Code Compliance Division at 248-651-4470 or fdcode@rochestermi.org.

It is important to note it is not considered a code violation if the existing conditions at the rental property were in compliance with the codes in place at the time of installation, so long as they remain safe, operational and in compliance with the prior code standards. However, if current codes require specific upgrades in order to be in compliance, the owner shall be responsible for those upgrades. The City has identified specific Inspection Items below with a "*" which may have different code requirements depending on the year of construction. Property owners are encouraged to contact the Fire Department Code Compliance Division if they have any questions regarding the applicability of the Inspection Item standards.

INSPECTION ITEMS:

ADDRESS NUMBERS: Street address numbers must be displayed in a position easily observed and readable from the street.

REASON: Numbers that are easy to read are necessary to ensure rapid response in an emergency.

EVIDENCE OF BLIGHT: Un-kept landscape or uncut grass, broken window and peeling paint, abandon vehicles and discarded materials in the yard are all indicators of blight
REASON: Blight conditions present not only a safety hazard to the community but have an effect on property values.

CHIMNEY(S)*: Must be structurally safe and in good repair. Exposed surfaces of metal or wood must be protected from weather and against decay and/or rust. Excessive rust, loose or missing mortar and cracked or missing bricks indicate problems.

REASON: They are frequently ignored until they become non-functional or are in danger of collapse. Exhaust gases are corrosive and cause chimneys to often deteriorate from the inside. Obstructed chimneys will cause carbon monoxide build up in the structure.

INGRESS & EGRESS: A safe, continuous and unobstructed path of travel must be available from within the home to exit doors.

REASON: An obstructed path increases the time it takes to flee a home during an emergency.

SOLID CORE WOOD OR RATED METAL DOOR BETWEEN LIVING AREA AND GARAGE: The door or doors separating the living area of the home and the attached garage or any other dwelling units must be solid wood door at least one and three-eighths inches thick, a 20 minute fire-rated door, or metal insulated exterior door.

REASON: These doors will delay the spread of fire and smoke into the residence and provide additional time for occupants to escape from the home.

FIRE SEPARATION*: The house and its attic must be separated from the attached garage by at least one half inch drywall. The drywall must run from the floor to the roof sheathing line or the ceiling must be covered with one half inch drywall.

REASON: This separation will delay the spread of smoke and fire into the residence and provide additional time for occupants to escape from the home. It also gives the fire department a chance to prevent fire from destroying the entire structure.

FUSE/CIRCUIT BREAKER PANEL: There may not be any unused openings in the panel cover, all spaces must be full or covered. All circuits must be labeled. Circuits may not be rated for more than 20 amps unless dedicated to an appliance requiring higher amps. Panel must have a minimum working space in front of the panel of 36 inches deep and 30 inches wide.

REASON: An unused opening in a panel exposes people to live electricity. Openings must be closed with metal covers or plastic inserts. All circuits must be labeled so occupants may de-energize specific circuits for repairs or in an emergency. Improperly rated circuits may not provide overload protection and cause a fire. Working space provides ready access to the panel.

USAGE OF EXTENSION CORDS: Usage of extension cords must be minimized. The amount of electrical current and extension cord can safely carry is limited by the size of its conductors. Because this is not generally known, extension cords are commonly overloaded. Extension cords are more susceptible to damage than permanent wiring methods.

REASON: Overloaded extension cords causes them to heat up to the point where the insulation melts and a short circuit or fire may occur. Damage to cords has been known to cause fires can also cause shorts and poor connections causing the possibility of a fire. Extension cords also can be a tripping hazard and damaged ones can be an electric shock hazard.

ELECTRIC COVER PLATES: Outlet and switch cover plates must be in place and in good condition.

REASON: Damaged or missing cover plates expose live electrical wiring. Contact with exposed wiring could be an electric shock hazard, short circuits could occur, or damage could cause poor connections.

HEATING UNIT AND WATER HEATING VENTING: For gas supplied heating units and water heating units, vent pipes are checked for deterioration, blockage or separation of connections. Each connection must be made consistent with manufacture requirements. Evidence of decay or rusting may indicate improper draft. Vent pipes are checked to ensure they are not too close to combustibles.

REASON: Proper venting ensures that the exhaust gases are removed from the home, permitting proper operation of the appliance and protecting occupants from carbon monoxide (CO). CO is a colorless, odorless gas that is detrimental to health and can cause death. Properly fastened connections keep flue gases in the vent pipe so that they are exhausted from the home. Improper draft causes rapid deterioration of the vent pipes because of the corrosive nature of exhaust gases. Vent pipes located too close to combustibles may cause a fire.

COMBUSTION AIR*: This is the air necessary for proper combustion of the fuel, draft hood dilution, and ventilation for the enclosure where the appliance is located. The area around the appliance need for proper air flow varies base on manufacture requirements, but is generally a minimum of 18 inches.

REASON: Incomplete burning of fuel can cause higher levels of carbon monoxide production, appliance malfunctions, and a risk of fire or explosion. Adequate combustion air provisions are sometimes lacking or have been blocked or covered.

GAS SHUTOFF: Each heating unit and water heater must be provided with a shutoff valve separate from the appliance. It must also be located on the same room as the appliance, no further than 6 feet from the appliance, and must be installed upstream from the union, connector or quick disconnect device it serves. The shutoff valve must be easily accessible.

REASON: The shutoff valve allows individual appliances to be shut down for repairs without effecting the operation of another appliance. It also allows for rapid shut down in the event of a fuel leak, equipment problem, or other emergency situation.

WATER HEATER DISCHARGE PIPE: An approved combination temperature and pressure relief valve discharge must be properly installed and maintained on water heaters. The discharge pipe must be rigid pipe, copper or galvanized, and shall be the same diameter as the relief valve outlet. If galvanized pipe is used, there may not be threads on the discharge end. The discharge pipe must be installed so as to run to near the floor to safely discharge water from the pipe. This pipe may not run through the floor into a crawl space. It may discharge into an air gap drain.

REASON: If the water heater malfunctions, steam and scalding water will be released through temperature/pressure relief valve. If a discharge pipe is not installed, people in the near vicinity of the water heater could be injured. The discharge pipe carries any steam or hot water to within six inches of the floor to preclude this problem. Because it is important to know of a water heater problem, one must be able to observe steam and/or water coming from the discharge pipe.

SMOKE DETECTORS: A minimum of one smoke detector is required on each story of a residential occupancy, including the basement. A smoke detector must be located in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms. And one smoke detector must be installed in each room used for sleeping purposes. The detectors must have fresh batteries and sound when tested manually or with artificial smoke.

REASON: The smoke detector is an effective life saving device. Having the detectors on each floor and in the immediate vicinity of sleeping rooms provides the early warning necessary to allow people to escape a fire.

WINDOWS*: Windows must be in good repair and be weather tight. Glazing must be free from cracks and holes. Must be easily opened able and capable of being held in any raised position without assistance. Any window or outside opening required for ventilation must have in-tacked screens. Windows size is measured to ensure the normal opening area of the window is large enough for a person to crawl through in an emergency. This open area must be at least the size required by the code when the windows were installed. If your home does not meet the requirements; an advisory note is required on the inspection form to state a reason.

REASON: Properly maintained windows prevent weather elements for entering the home. Damaged glass presents a hazard to occupants. In the event of fire, occupants are at risk if windows cannot be secured quickly and easily in an open position. Screens prevent insect infestation. Fatal fires often occur while people are asleep. A person may be delayed in noticing a fire, those awaking may be slow to react, the room may be smoke filled and/or dark, and many other factors that may compromise the existing of the home. The window in the bedroom may be the only available means of escape and therefore, it must be large enough to permit rapid escape.

BASEMENT SLEEPING ROOM REQUIREMENTS*: If a basement room is to be used for sleeping purposes, it must have an open able window with a clear open area of 5.7 square feet and a sill height of not more than 44 inches above the floor or a door in the room opening directly to the outside of the structure. If the window is below grade and does not meet the 5.7 square foot clear open area, the room is not considered a legal sleeping room. If your homes does not meet the requirements, and the sleeping room was constructed before the requirements were enacted, an advisory note is required to be provided on the inspection form.

REASON: Provides for means of escape in an emergency.