NSPIRE Landlord Pre-Inspection Checklist

National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate • Quick Reference Guide for HCV Landlords

The Golden Rule of NSPIRE: HUD no longer fails units for minor cosmetic wear and tear. Inspections focus strictly on **resident health, safety, and core functionality**. Complete this 5-minute walkthrough before your inspection.

5-MINUTE PRE-INSPECTION WALKTHROUGH

☐	**1. Smoke & CO Detectors**	Test every detector. Working **smoke alarms** are required inside every bedroom and on every level. Working **carbon monoxide (CO) alarms** are required outside sleeping areas if the unit has gas/fuel appliances or an attached garage.
☐	**2. Window Locks (All Floors)**	Lock and unlock **every operable window on every floor** (including 2nd+ stories). Permanently attached locks are required; wooden dowels, sticks, or tension rods do **not** count.
☐	**3. GFCI Outlets & Electrical**	Press **Test** and **Reset** on all outlets within **6 feet** of sinks, tubs, or laundry hookups. Ensure all outlets and switches have intact cover plates with zero exposed wires.
☐	**4. Handrails & Guardrails**	Tug on all rails to ensure zero wobble. Stairs with **4 or more risers** require a handrail (28"–42" high). Porches, decks, or landings with a drop **over 30 inches** require a sturdy guardrail (≥30" high).
☐	**5. Plumbing & Leaks**	Run all faucets and flush toilets. Check under sinks with a flashlight for active drips, dampness, or water pooling. Ensure hot and cold water work properly and drains flow freely.
☐	**6. Walls, Floors & Mold**	Patch wall holes larger than **2 inches** and carpet tears exposing **10% or more** of the subfloor. Check for tripping hazards (>3/4" vertical rise) and clean/treat any mold-like growth (≥4 sq. in.).
☐	**7. Doors, Exits & Utilities**	Verify all utilities (electric, gas, water) are turned **on**. Confirm exterior entry doors lock securely without keys required from the inside, and keep all egress windows and exit doors unblocked.

What PASSES (Cosmetic & Minor Items)

- **Wallpaper & Paint:** Peeling, dated, or loose wallpaper and minor wall scuffs *(unless exposing deteriorated lead paint in pre-1978 units)*.
- **Carpet & Flooring:** Intact carpet in any room, including traffic wear or old stains, as long as subfloor is covered and flat.
- **Sink Stoppers:** Missing or inoperable sink stoppers are Low severity and pass HCV inspections.
- **General Housekeeping:** Everyday clutter or normal wear that does not block exits or create a fire/pest hazard.

Top 5 Surprise Fails Under NSPIRE

- **2nd-Story Window Locks:** Unlike old HQS rules, upper-level windows are no longer exempt from needing working locks.
- **Unresponsive GFCI Buttons:** A GFCI outlet that fails to trip when tested is an automatic fail.
- **Missing Guardrails (>30" Drop):** Any porch or landing over 30" off the ground without a guardrail is a 24-hour hazard.
- **Pre-1978 Peeling Paint:** Deteriorated paint in older units where a child under 6 lives/visits triggers strict lead-paint rules.
- **Unlit Pilot Lights / Off Utilities:** Inspectors cannot pass a unit if heat, water heater, or utilities are off.

NSPIRE DEFICIENCY SEVERITIES & REPAIR TIMELINES

Severity Level	Repair Window	Examples & HCV Inspection Impact
Life-Threatening (LT)	**24 Hours**	Missing smoke/CO alarms, gas leaks, exposed live wiring, blocked exits, missing guardrail on >30" drop. **Immediate Fail; must fix within 24 hours.**
Severe & Moderate	**30 Days** (Before move-in on initials)	Broken window lock, non-working GFCI outlet, active plumbing leak, loose handrail, wall hole >2", pests, mold ≥4 sq. in. **HCV Fail until repaired.**
Low Severity	**60 Days**	Missing or broken sink stopper, minor non-safety items. **Counts as an HCV Pass.**