

Property Maintenance Checklist Guide

The intent of the City of O'Fallon Property Maintenance Program is to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens. We hope this guide will assist property owners, buyers, renters, realtors, property managers, and other interested persons in understanding the inspection program. This is a list of violations commonly found by the Property Maintenance Inspectors, with a brief explanation of what the inspectors are checking, and the reason for their importance. Because the inspectors follow the Property Maintenance Code and the City's additions to the Code, this is not an all-inclusive list of items for which the inspectors check. Code books and the City's additions to the Codes are available for reference at the O'Fallon Public Library and in the Community Development Department.

***ADDRESS NUMBERS ON THE HOUSE:** Street address numbers must be displayed on the house in a position easily observed and readable for the street. The numbers must be Arabic figures at least 4 inches tall and each stroke must be at least ½ inch wide.

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

***OUTSIDE APPEARANCE:** The exterior of the home and its surrounding area must be maintained to provide a presentable appearance. Structural members must be free of deterioration and capable of supporting loads imposed upon them. Weeds and grass must be properly maintained and rubbish must not be allowed to accumulate. No unregistered or un-inspected motor vehicle may be parked, kept or stored on the property and no vehicle may be in a state of major disrepair or disassembly.

REASON: A lack of maintenance to a structure and surrounding area poses a threat to public health, safety, and welfare as well as undermining property values.

***GUTTER/DOWNSPOUTS:** Roof drains, gutters and downspouts must be in good repair and free from obstructions.

REASON: Prevent the entry of rodents and the effect of weather. Must provide structural integrity of the home.

***FOUNDATION EXTERIOR:** Foundation must be free from cracks, breaks and openings. Foundation should also be properly aligned to support the structure.

REASON: Proper maintenance and appearance of accessory structures eliminates the threat to public health, safety, and welfare. It also improves the neighborhood appearance.

***ACCESSORY STRUCTURES:** Storage buildings, detached garages, fences, walls, etc. must be kept in good repair to provide a presentable appearance.

REASON: Proper maintenance and appearance of accessory structures eliminates the threat to public health, safety, and welfare. It also improves neighborhood appearance.

***STAIRWAYS, HANDRAILS, AND GUARDRAILS:** Must be firmly fastened and in good condition. Every interior and exterior set of stairs having more than three steps must have a handrail on at least one side of the stairs. Every open portion of stairs, landings, balconies, porches, decks, ramps or other walking surfaces which are more than thirty inches above the floor or grade below must have guardrails. Handrails must be 34 to 38 inches above the nosing of the stair treads and if the handrail is next to the wall and the handrail. Porches, balconies or raised floor surfaces must have guardrails not less than 36 inches in height. Open sides of stairs with a total rise of more than 30 inches above the floor must have guardrails not less than 34 inches in height measured vertically from the nosing the treads. Required guardrails must have intermediate rails or ornamental closures which will not allow the passage of an object four inches in diameter. Horizontal rails or closures which form a ladder effect are not permitted.
REASON: Handrails and guardrails are meant to prevent falls. They must be firmly fastened and in good condition to ensure they perform that function.

***DECKS, PORCHES, AND BALCONIES:** Must be kept in good repair, be properly anchored and capable of supporting imposed loads.
REASON- Ensures they will not become a hazard to occupants or visitors.

***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 have caused carbon monoxide deaths.

***OUTSIDE DOOR LOCKS:** All exit doors must be easily openable from the side from which exit is to be made without the need for keys, special effort or knowledge.
REASON- Improperly locked doors can keep occupants from escaping a fire.

***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 burning home.

***OUTSIDE GFCI (GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTER):** All electric receptacles on the exterior must be GFCI protected except those not readily accessible.
REASON- GFCI receptacles provide a degree of safety for people using portable handheld tools, gardening appliances, electric lawn mowers and trimmers, etc. A GFCI is a device designed to protect people from electrocution.

***SUMP PUMP DISCHARGE:** Water from sump pump must be discharged to the exterior of the home and not into the sanitary sewer system.
REASON- The sanitary sewer system is already over burdened with storm water infiltration and all additional ground water must be kept out.

***WINDOWS/SCREENS:** Windows must be in good repair and be weather tight. Glazing must be free from cracks and holes. Must be easily openable and capable of being held in any raised position without assistance. Every door, window, and other outside opening used for ventilation of habitable rooms, kitchens or food storage areas must have tightly fitting insect screens. Screens may not have tears or holes large enough to permit entry of insects.

REASON: Properly maintained windows prevent weather elements for entering the home. Damaged glass presents a hazard to occupants. Windows which are propped open with sticks or other objects can fall causing injuries to fingers and hands if the prop is bumped. 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. Insects in food preparation areas can cause contamination to food and cause human illness.

***GARAGE GFCI RECEPTACLES:** receptacles on garage walls are required to be GFCI protected, unless they are not readily accessible or are located for an appliance occupying a dedicated space.

REASON- Protects people from electrocution. See Outside GFCI receptacles above.

***GAS APPLIANCE(S) IN GARAGE:** Heating and cooling appliances located in a garage must be protected from being hit by vehicles. If the appliance generates a glow, spark or flame capable of igniting gasoline vapors, it must be installed so the burners, burner ignition devices, or heating elements are at least 18 inches above the garage floor.

REASON- Prevent damage to appliances and their fuel source. Vapors from gasoline leaking from a vehicle could be ignited by the appliance ignition source. Raising the ignition chamber at least 18 inches above the garage floor provides a degree of safety.

***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 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. It also gives the fire department a chance to prevent the fire from destroying the entire home.

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

***UNDER STAIRS:** Enclosed accessible space under the stairs shall have walls under stair surface and any soffits protected on the enclosed side with one-half inch gypsum board.

REASON – To protect means of egress for areas served by steps.

***ELECTRIC SERVICE PANELS:** Provide access to all electric service panel covers for inspection.

REASON – For ability to inspect wiring inside panel if needed.

***FUSE/CIRCUIT BREAKER PANEL:** There may not be any unused openings in the panel and 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 30 inch minimum working space in front and a width of not less than the width of the panel from the panel to 36 inches from the panel.

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 can also cause shorts and poor connections causing the possibility of a fire. Extension cords also can be a tripping hazard and damaged one 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.

***LAUNDRY AREA:** Every laundry room requires at least one grounded-type receptacle. If an ungrounded system is in use, this laundry receptacle must be grounded to the grounding terminal bar in the service panel or main switch.

REASON- Appliances used in laundry rooms requires a grounding conductor for safe operation. Grounding these appliances reduces the risk of electrical shock if a person comes in contact with a defective appliance.

***HEATING UNIT AND WATER HEATING VENTING:** Vent pipes are checked for deterioration, blockage or separation of connections. Each connection must have three fasteners (generally self-tapping sheet metal screws). 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. Adequate combustion air provisions are sometimes lacking or have been blocked or covered.

REASON- Incomplete burning of fuel can cause higher levels of carbon monoxide production, appliance malfunctions, and a risk of fire or explosion.

***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, fire 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 within six inches of the floor. 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.

***CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS:** Provide carbon monoxide detectors in all residential occupancies, pursuant to the requirements set forth in the Illinois Carbon Monoxide Detector Act. CO alarms should be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions. The Illinois law requires the owner of the building to install carbon monoxide detectors within 15 feet of all rooms used for sleeping. The law applies only to those that use fossil fuel to cook, heat or produce hot water, or is connected to an enclosed garage. Make sure furniture or draperies cannot cover up the alarm. The carbon monoxide detector may be battery operated, plug-in with battery back-up power high on the wall because CO from any source will be well-mixed with the air in the house or wired into the home's AC power with a secondary battery back-up
REASON- To detect deadly carbon monoxide gases that can kill residence occupants.

***INTERIOR SURFACES:** All interior surfaces, including windows and doors, must be clean, sanitary and in good condition. Flaking or peeling paint, cracked plaster, rotted wood or other defective surfaces must be repaired.
REASON- The interior of a home must be properly maintained so as not to affect the occupant's health and safety.

***HANDRAILS/GUARDRAILS:** Refer to "Stairways, Handrails, and Guards" previously referenced in this guide.

***KITCHEN GFCI RECEPTACLES:** Any electric outlet serving a kitchen countertop must be GFCI protected.
REASON- Many countertop appliances are ungrounded, and the use of water and other liquids with them on grounded surfaces creates a hazard to people.

***KITCHEN GARBAGE DISPOSAL:** If a disposal is installed, it must operate.
REASON- An inoperative disposal can cause plumbing problems and contribute to unsanitary conditions in a food preparation area.

***KITCHEN RUNNING WATER / LEAK:** Faucets, sprayer, and under sink plumbing will be checked for leaks or improper installation.
REASON FOR RUNNING WATER- Plumbing fixtures which do not operate adequately can cause water damage and increase the possibility of disease to the occupants.

***BATHROOM GFCI RECEPTACLES:** Every bathroom must have at least one electrical outlet and it must be GFCI protected.
REASON- This outlet serves the many grooming and personal hygiene appliances used in bathrooms. This receptacle must be GFCI protected to provide protection from electrocution for occupants.

***BATHROOM RUNNING WATER / LEAKS:** Bathroom basin faucets and under counter top plumbing will be checked for leaks or improper installation.
REASON- Leaks or improper installation can cause water damage and increase the possibility of disease.

***BATHROOM VENT TO THE OUTSIDE:** An openable window or mechanical ventilation system must be installed in each bathroom or toilet room. If a mechanical vent is used, it must exhaust moisture-laden air to the exterior of the home.

REASON- Failure to remove moisture-laden air from the structure to prevent deterioration of the interior of the home.

***BEDROOMS:** *This section will be explained in several parts beginning with room size (for occupancy load), window size (for egress requirements), window requirements, electrical requirements, and includes basement sleeping room requirements.*

***ROOM SIZE:** Each bedroom will be measured to determine size so the occupant load for it can be determined. A bedroom must be at least 70 square feet to be occupied by one person and 50 square feet per person is required for a room occupied by more than one person.

REASON- Permits comfort and safety for occupants. Prevents overcrowding which can contribute to disease spread, loss of privacy, and excessive wear and abuse to the home.

***WINDOW SIZE:** Windows are measured to ensure the normal opening area of the window is large enough for a person to crawl through in an emergency. This normal opening area is the open space available when one sash is moved completely away from the other. An example would be raising the bottom sash as high as the window would allow. The open area is what is then measured.

- Window requirements:
 - Minimum net clear opening height - 24 inches
 - Minimum net clear opening width - 20 inches
 - basement and second floor windows - 5.7 square feet minimum
 - ground floor windows - 5 square feet minimum
 - Basement sleeping room - must have openable window with sill height of no more than 44 inches above the floor, or a door in the room opening directly to the outside of the structure.
 - If the basement window does not meet the requirements as stated above, the room will not be considered at legal sleeping room. The occupancy permit will be stamped: **NO BASEMENT SLEEPING ROOMS PERMITTED.**

Many existing homes do not meet these requirements, but we do not make you replace the windows. If your home does not meet the requirements, an advisory letter is attached to the occupancy permit. The advisory letter serves as notice that the windows do not meet egress requirements and could be a problem. If existing windows open to at least 24 inches vertically and at least 20 inches horizontally we do not issue the letter.

REASON FOR WINDOW SIZE and BASEMENT SLEEPING ROOM WINDOW REQUIREMENTS - 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.

***WINDOW REQUIREMENTS:** The window must be easily opened and capable of being held in position by window hardware.

REASON- Windows with inoperative or missing hold-open hardware are sometimes propped open with sticks or other items. These items can be bumped and cause the window to fall causing bodily injury. Additionally, a window not easily secured in an open position can prevent the rapid escape in the event of a fire.

***ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS:** There must be two separate and remote receptacles in each bedroom.

REASON- To minimize or eliminate the use of extension cords. Misuse of extension cords is a fire hazard. See Usage of Extension Cords previously explained in this guide.

***MISCELLANEOUS:** Additional GFCI requirements-Crawl space which is at or below grade level; unfinished portions of basements (does not apply to sleeping rooms or family rooms); and any outlet within 6 feet of the outside edge of a wet bar sink.

Additionally, outlets may not be installed face-up in the work surfaces or countertop surrounding the wet bar. Hydro massage bathtubs are required to be GFCI protected and any outlets within 5 feet of the inside wall of the tub must also be GFCI protected.

REASON- Provides for protection from electrocution of the occupants.

***POOLS:** Swimming pools, spas, and hot tubs located outdoors have specific requirements for barriers, alarms, and electric. If your home has an outdoor pool, spa or hot tub, please ask for a detailed explanation concerning the requirements.

REASON- Barrier and alarm requirements are established to provide protection against potential drowning or near drowning by restricting access to pools, spas and hot tubs. The electrical requirements are established to provide protection from electrocution.

We hope this guide has helped you in preparing for your property maintenance inspection. Please feel free to ask the inspector any questions you may still have concerning any inspection item. Our goal is to help you ensure your property is safe and ready for sale or occupancy.