OFFICIAL NOTICE

Housing Authority / Property Management Compliance Bulletin

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE IN HOUSING INSPECTION PROTOCOL

Transition from Housing Quality Standards (HQS) to the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE)

Date:	July 21, 2026
Re:	Notification of HUD's Transition from HQS to NSPIRE Inspection Standards
To:	All Landlords, Property Owners, and Property Management Companies participating in HUD-assisted housing programs; and All Tenants residing in units affected by this change
From:	Housing Authority / Program Administrator — Inspections & Compliance

1. Purpose

This notice formally informs landlords, property owners, property management companies, and tenants participating in HUD-assisted housing programs of a significant change in how housing units are inspected for health, safety, and habitability. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has replaced Housing Quality Standards (HQS) with the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) as the governing inspection protocol. This notice explains the reason for the change, the applicable compliance dates, the major differences between the two standards, and what each affected party should do to prepare.

2. Background

For decades, HUD-assisted housing was evaluated under multiple, inconsistent inspection frameworks: Housing Quality Standards (HQS) governed the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), Project-Based Voucher (PBV), and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation programs, while the Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS) governed Public Housing and Multifamily Housing. HUD determined that maintaining separate, program-specific standards created confusing and duplicative requirements for owners who operate across multiple programs, and did not consistently prioritize the conditions most likely to affect resident health and safety.

To address this, HUD finalized the NSPIRE rule, “Economic Growth Regulatory Relief and Consumer Protection Act: Implementation of National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate” (88 FR 30442), published May 11, 2023. NSPIRE consolidates HQS and UPCS into a single, unified physical condition standard intended to apply consistently across nearly all HUD housing programs. HUD has since issued the accompanying Inspection Standards Notice (FR-6086-N-05, June 22, 2023) and Scoring Notice (FR-6086-N-06, July 7, 2023), along with a series of administrative-procedures and compliance-date notices identified in the References section below.

3. What Is Changing

Effective for Public Housing and Multifamily Housing as of July 1, 2023, and for Housing Choice Voucher, Project-Based Voucher, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation programs no later than February 1, 2027, HQS and UPCS are being permanently retired and replaced by NSPIRE. Once a Public Housing Agency (PHA) or property transitions, all unit and

property inspections — including initial, annual, and complaint-driven inspections — will be conducted using NSPIRE standards, scoring, and administrative procedures rather than the prior HQS checklist.

4. Key Implementation Dates

HUD has extended the compliance deadline for voucher-based programs three times in response to concerns raised by PHAs and industry groups about landlord participation and readiness. The table below reflects the most current, HUD-published dates as of this notice.

Program	Milestone	Date
Public Housing & Multifamily Housing	NSPIRE physical condition standards and administrative procedures take effect; UPCS retired	**July 1, 2023**
Public Housing & Multifamily Housing	NSPIRE scoring methodology takes effect	**October 1, 2023**
Public Housing & Multifamily Housing	Scoring of new affirmative requirements begins (fire-labeled doors; GFCI/AFCI; guardrails; HVAC; interior lighting; minimum electrical and lighting)	**October 1, 2026**
Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), Project-Based Voucher (PBV), Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation	Compliance deadline for full transition from HQS to NSPIRE (third HUD extension); PHAs may continue using HQS as previously defined until this date	**February 1, 2027**
All covered programs	Statutory carbon monoxide alarm and smoke alarm requirements apply regardless of a PHA's NSPIRE implementation date	**Currently in effect**

Note: *Until a PHA formally transitions its voucher programs to NSPIRE, it may continue to use "HQS as previously defined" for HCV, PBV, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation inspections. Owners and tenants should confirm directly with their administering PHA which standard currently applies to their unit, and watch for a follow-up notice announcing the local transition date.*

5. Key Differences Between HQS and NSPIRE

The table below summarizes the most significant differences between the outgoing HQS protocol and the incoming NSPIRE standard.

Category	Housing Quality Standards (HQS) (24 CFR 982.401, prior version)	NSPIRE (24 CFR 5.703 et seq.)
Governing standard	Separate standards per program: HQS for Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8; UPCS for Public Housing and Multifamily Housing	One unified physical condition standard applied across nearly all HUD housing programs (Public Housing, Multifamily, HCV, PBV, Mod Rehab)
Inspection philosophy	Results-based: generates a checklist ("punch list") of items to correct after the fact	Combines a risk-based approach (encourages ongoing, day-to-day compliance) with a results-based approach (timely, verified correction)
Inspectable areas	Five inspectable areas	Consolidated to three inspectable areas: Unit, Inside (common areas), and Outside (site)
Deficiency classification	No standardized, uniform severity ranking across programs	Every deficiency is classified by severity: Life-Threatening, Severe, Moderate, or Low

Category	Housing Quality Standards (HQS) (24 CFR 982.401, prior version)	NSPIRE (24 CFR 5.703 et seq.)
Correction timeframes	Timeframes varied by PHA policy; no uniform national standard	Life-Threatening deficiencies (e.g., no functioning smoke alarm, gas leak, exposed electrical wiring) must generally be corrected within 24 hours; other deficiencies follow tiered, standardized timeframes
Resident role	Tenant-reported issues handled inconsistently across jurisdictions	Adds an emphasis on resident health and safety in the spaces where they spend the most time, including a path for residents to report deficiencies between inspections
Self-inspection	Not required	New annual self-inspection and reporting requirement for owners of certain Public Housing and Multifamily properties
Newly mandated safety items	Not uniformly required by the inspection standard itself	Carbon monoxide alarms/detectors, smoke alarms, fire-labeled doors, GFCI/AFCI electrical protection, guardrails, HVAC function, and interior/exterior lighting are explicit, scored requirements
Applicable programs (as of this notice)	Being phased out program-by-program	Fully in effect for Public Housing and Multifamily Housing; compliance for HCV, PBV, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation currently required no later than February 1, 2027

6. What This Means for You

Landlords, Owners, and Property Management Companies

- Familiarize your maintenance and leasing staff with the NSPIRE inspectable items and severity classifications, available at hud.gov/reac/nspire-standards.
- Proactively inspect units for Life-Threatening conditions — missing or non-functioning smoke alarms, missing carbon monoxide alarms, gas leaks, exposed wiring, and similar hazards — since these generally require correction within 24 hours of identification.
- Confirm that smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms/detectors are installed and functioning; these are statutory requirements under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 and 2023, and apply regardless of a PHA's NSPIRE transition date.
- Budget and plan for the newly scored affirmative requirements — fire-labeled doors, GFCI/AFCI protection, guardrails, HVAC function, and interior lighting — which begin affecting Public Housing and Multifamily Housing scores on October 1, 2026.
- Communicate promptly with your administering PHA to confirm your program's transition date, inspection scheduling changes, and any required documentation or self-inspection obligations.

Tenants

- Your right to a safe, decent, and habitable home is not changing. NSPIRE is intended to strengthen — not reduce — the health and safety protections your unit must meet.
- You may notice a different inspection process, including new items being checked (such as smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, electrical safety, and lighting) and a different scoring/classification system for any deficiencies found.

- You will continue to have the ability to report health and safety concerns in your unit to your landlord and your PHA between scheduled inspections.
- If you have questions about how this change affects your household, contact your PHA or property manager using the information below.

7. Action Items and Timeline

- Now through the applicable compliance date: Owners and PHAs should review current unit conditions against NSPIRE standards and correct any Life-Threatening or Severe deficiencies as they are identified.
- By October 1, 2026: Public Housing and Multifamily Housing owners should ensure fire-labeled doors, GFCI/AFCI protection, guardrails, HVAC systems, and interior lighting meet NSPIRE requirements, as these begin affecting inspection scores on this date.
- By February 1, 2027: All Housing Choice Voucher, Project-Based Voucher, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation units must be inspected under NSPIRE rather than HQS, unless your PHA transitions sooner.
- Ongoing: Maintain functioning smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms/detectors at all times, independent of the NSPIRE transition timeline.

8. Questions and Additional Information

Landlords, owners, property management companies, and tenants with questions about this transition, their unit's current inspection status, or their program's specific transition date should contact their administering Public Housing Agency (PHA) or property manager directly. General information on NSPIRE, including the full inspection standards, scoring methodology, and self-inspection tools, is available from HUD's Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) at hud.gov/reac/nspire and by email at REAC_TAC@hud.gov.

9. References — HUD Notices and Federal Register Publications

- NSPIRE Final Rule — 88 FR 30442, published May 11, 2023 (effective July 1 and October 1, 2023).
- Inspection Standards Notice, FR-6086-N-05 — 88 FR (June 22, 2023 issue), published June 22, 2023, applicable July 1, 2023.
- Scoring Notice, FR-6086-N-06 — published July 7, 2023, applicable July 1, 2023.
- Administrative Procedures Notice, PIH 2023-16 / H 2023-07 — published June 30, 2023, applicable July 1, 2023 (Public Housing and Multifamily Housing).
- Compliance Date Extension (CPD Programs), FR-6086-N-07 — published September 18, 2023.
- Compliance Date Extension (HCV/PBV), FR-6086-N-08 — 88 FR, published September 28, 2023.
- HCV/PBV Administrative Procedures Notice, PIH 2023-28 — published September 29, 2023, affirming compliance extension to October 1, 2024.
- Second Compliance Date Extension (HCV, PBV, Mod Rehab, and CPD programs), FR-6086-N-09 — published July 5, 2024, extending compliance to October 1, 2025.
- HCV/PBV Administrative Procedures Notice, PIH 2024-26, REV-1 — published August 9, 2024, applicable October 1, 2025.

- New Affirmative Requirements Scoring Extension, PIH 2024-39 / H 2024-11 — published December 17, 2024, extending scoring start to October 1, 2025.
- Third Compliance Date Extension (HCV, PBV, Mod Rehab), FR-6086-N-12 — 90 FR 46911, published September 30, 2025, extending compliance to February 1, 2027.
- New Affirmative Requirements Scoring Extension, PIH 2025-27 — published September 30, 2025, extending scoring start to October 1, 2026.
- Full library of NSPIRE notices and proposed rules: hud.gov/reac/nspire-notices.

This notice is provided for informational purposes to assist affected parties in preparing for HUD's transition from HQS to NSPIRE. It does not modify any lease, Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract, or Annual Contributions Contract (ACC). Recipients should consult their administering PHA or legal counsel with questions specific to their program participation.