

HQS Advisory Tenant Housekeeping

What are you looking for?

We recognize that housekeeping is, to a large degree, a matter of personal preference. Your Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspector must, however, make observations about your housekeeping and check for anything that you are doing that may place you, the other occupants of your unit or your neighbors at risk. If you look at your copy of the ***Field Inspection Report*** that your inspector leaves with you at the conclusion of the inspection, you will see that housekeeping is indicated as being *good*, *acceptable* or *needs improvement*. The inspector will also rate the wear-and-tear in your unit. You will receive the pink copy of the form and your landlord will receive the yellow copy.

A rating of *good* is used to indicate exceptional housekeeping practices. If your landlord sees that we have rated as *good*, he or she will probably have increased confidence that you are taking suitable care of the property. Also notice our appraisal of the degree of wear-and-tear on the unit. Good housekeeping and low wear-and-tear will be one indication that you are a trustworthy tenant.

A rating of *acceptable* indicates that there are no current concerns but that there could be improvement. If the rating is *acceptable*, the landlord may take closer note of the wear-and-tear assessment to see if there are any signs of trouble. The *acceptable* rating is used in approximately 80 percent of our inspections.

A rating *needs improvement* should be taken seriously. If the inspector uses this category it indicates that there are concerns that may lead to an HQS failure. It is particularly important to notice if there is excessive wear-and-tear in the units as well as housekeeping practices that need improvement.

Can my unit fail due to my housekeeping?

If poor housekeeping practices place you family or other residents at risk due to sanitation, security or safety hazards the inspector will fail your unit under HQS guideline. If the inspector checks the box that indicates *needs improvement* on the ***Field Inspection Report*** it does not, by itself, indicate an HQS failure. If there is a need to fail your unit for housekeeping the inspector will make specific notations on the form and discuss them with you.

If an inspector cannot conduct an inspection due to excessive personal property or clutter, the inspector may choose to fail the unit or simply refuse to conduct the inspection. If the inspector chooses to refuse the inspection, you will have only one additional opportunity to properly prepare your unit for inspection. A refusal counts as one of two allowed missed inspections.

What must I do if my unit does fail?

If your unit fails due to housekeeping, you must correct the problem within the timeframe noted on the *Field Inspection Report*. Normally, you will be given 10 days time. If there are emergent conditions resulting from poor housekeeping or tenant caused damage, the inspector may give you shorter timeframes to correct the problems. For example, if you or members of your household have disabled all of the smoke detectors in your unit by removing batteries, disconnecting the detectors or by damaging them in some way, the inspector will instruct you to correct the problem within 24 hours.

How does excessive wear-and-tear affect my assistance?

If an inspector indicates excessive wear-and-tear on the *Field Inspection Report* it does not have any immediate consequences. However, the Bellingham Housing Authority will not continue assistance for a tenant who consistently damages their unit. If your landlord can show that you are damaging your unit beyond what would be considered normal, you must make arrangements to repay your landlord to avoid losing your housing assistance. If you leave your unit owing money to our landlord in an amount that exceeds your deposit (including any unpaid rent) then your assistance will not be continued. You may enter into a repayment agreement with your landlord and your continuing assistance will be dependent upon how well you honor your commitment to repay the agreed to amounts.

Can I lose my assistance for poor housekeeping?

If you do not correct failures that are attributed to your housekeeping practices or to tenant caused damage, the Bellingham Housing Authority will send you a notice that your assistance will be terminated. Once you have received the notice you can still fix the problem and avoid termination. You must remedy the housekeeping problem, make all necessary repairs and pass an HQS reinspection *before the effective date of the termination*. If you lose your assistance due to housekeeping or damage to your unit, you may not reapply for voucher assistance for a period of three years.