



Owner News

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Successful Inspections, The First Time!

Want a successful inspection the first time? Here's how! MBHP inspections are required to ensure compliance with HUD's housing quality standards and for certification, then yearly once certification is received. To better help property owners pass those important inspections the first time, the MBHP Inspections Department has put together a Top 10 check list.

First, start with the walls—specifically, the paint.

If your rental unit was built before 1979 and there are children under the age of 6 residing in the unit, you'll need to have it inspected and receive a letter of compliance from a certified/licensed lead inspector stating that the unit has been assessed and is lead safe.

Because the letter verifies only that a unit is lead safe—not lead free—at the time of the inspection, it is good only for as long as there is no paint chipping, peeling or flaking. Should an inspector note any paint deterioration, the owner will be given 30 days to have it remedied and re-inspected by a licensed lead paint inspector.

All new building construction initiated after 1979 should contain lead-free paint. If your unit was built during or after 1979, all you need to do is submit a building permit showing the date of construction.

This first step is an important one; a child's health can be seriously impacted by lead ingestion. Protect a child and your own liability by properly handling lead paint issues.

Next on the Top 10: asbestos. By law, asbestos—often found as insulation in older structures—must

be either encapsulated (contained so it doesn't escape or cannot easily be accessed) or removed.

"Both must be done by a licensed asbestos abatement contractor," said Kevin Donaher, MBHP's director of property owner and inspection services. "This is not a do-it-yourself job."

A contractor's work-completed invoice is acceptable proof of compliance. Again, due to health issues



One thing inspectors will check is that the exterior of the building is weather resistant and that no paint is peeling and siding is not exposed to the elements.

caused by asbestos exposure, compliance protects both the tenant and the property owner.

Third: rodent and pest control. "We want to see no critters and no evidence of critters," said MBHP's Property Owner Services Manager Howard Wensley.

The first step to controlling rodent and pest issues is to provide proper garbage and debris containment and disposal, preferably away from the building. Additionally, Wensley said identifying and remedying pests' access to the building is important. Filling and patching holes, keeping exterior doors shut and well sealed, and maintaining foundation integrity goes along way in keeping a building pest free.

If upon inspection a building is found to have a problem, the property owner will be required to hire a certified pest control expert to remedy the problem and provide a detailed work-completed invoice.

"If rodents and pests have no way to get into the building, then there should be no problem with recurrence," noted Wensley.

Other items on the Top 10 list:

- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors must be operational and properly placed in the unit. Interior doors should contain no locks that could result in a person being unable to exit a room.
- Handrails and guardrails must be present and installed properly, windows must open and shut without being propped up, and locks and screens are required. Either a window or a working ventilation fan is needed for each bathroom.
- All plumbing must be operational and free of leaks.
- All utilities must be on and working properly. Hot water temperature should be between 110 and 130 degrees.

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Successful Inspections

continued from front

- There must be appropriate and useable means of egress. Porches and stairways need to be safe and intact. All wooden and metal fire escapes must be in safe working condition and must be inspected and certified safe every five years.
- The exterior of the building must be intact and weather resistant. Windows must be weather-tight and caulked. Exterior lights are required both front and rear of the building.
- The apartment must be “move-in ready.” Remember, this will be someone’s home. Flooring should be free of trip hazards. Bathroom and kitchen floors must be water-tight and easily cleanable. The stove should be in working order and clean.

To learn more about inspection preparation and pass that first inspection with flying colors, contact the MBHP Inspections Supervisor Carlos Hoffens at (617) 425-6652.

Want to avoid the hassle of waiting for your rent subsidy checks to arrive in the mail? Want to save a trip to the bank to deposit them?

Switch to direct deposit! For more information, log on to www.mbhp.org and visit the Property Owner Programs page!

Inspection Appointment Reminder Calls Are a Hit!

The appointment reminder call has become a staple in many offices, and it’s now helping property owners and tenants with their inspections.

MBHP recently partnered with a calling service to remind property owners and tenants of upcoming inspections. The inspections are required as part of tenants’ obligations for participation in the Section 8 voucher program, and it is each tenant’s responsibility to make sure the inspector has access to the unit.

Two days before a scheduled inspection, the service will call the tenant with a recorded message reminding him or her of the inspection date, that the inspector will be there between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., and that the tenant or his/her

designee (an adult 18 years or older or the property owner if he/she has a letter from the tenant in hand that authorizes the owner to access the apartment) must be present.

A similar call is made to the property owner, making him/her aware of the upcoming inspection.

“Early results are positive,” said MBHP Director of Property Owner and Inspectional Services Kevin Donaher. “Our tenants tell us it’s helpful getting them (the calls).” He added that the reminder calls make it even more important for property owners to update MBHP about new contact numbers.

The calls are providing an added benefit: fewer missed inspections that need to be rescheduled!

DID YOU KNOW...

There’s a way for property owners and home owners to get help with accessibility improvements for homes occupied by elderly or disabled adult residents, or families with disabled children, allowing them to remain in their homes?



Accessibility improvements, such as this ramp for a wheelchair-bound homeowner, are just some of the approved uses for a home modification loan.

The statewide Home Modification Loan Program, funded through the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, provides low-interest loans for property owners to make new access modifications to the primary, personal residences of the above-mentioned populations.

In Fiscal Year 2008, MBHP closed 11 loans at an average of \$26,900 per loan for such improvements as ramps, bathroom accessibility, railings and grip bars, chair lifts, first-floor bedroom and/or bathroom additions, and kitchen counter accessibility.

To learn more about the HMLP, log on to www.mbhp.org and visit “Home Modification Assistance” under Property Owner Programs or call (617) 425-6637.

Tenants Receive Fuel Assistance Information

In October, MBHP tenants with Section 8 and MRVP subsidies received information in their quarterly newsletter regarding fuel assistance and discounts.

Most tenants with subsidies who pay their own utilities—whether or not they receive fuel assistance—can get a discount rate of 10 to 30 percent for electric, gas or both, depending on their household income levels.

The information was included in the Fall 2008 *mbhp@home* newsletter, and it outlined the process by which they can apply for the discounts.

For a copy of the information, contact MBHP Communications Representative Beth Wagner at (617) 425-6691 or beth.wagner@mbhp.org.