

How to Prepare for System Certification Inspections

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What is an Electrical Certification?

We need to be able to mark the box on the form that states; "This inspection reveals that all visible wiring is properly installed and appears to be in good condition and that the main service is adequate for the connected load."

What should be done before the inspector goes to the property?

The electric service will need to be on. All areas of the building(s) need to be accessible and the main panel should not have any obstructions blocking access to it. All exposed wiring and extension cords should be removed. Missing outlet covers, missing switch plate covers and missing junction box covers should be replaced. All burnt out light bulbs should be replaced. Each room is required to have a wall switch (by the entrance) operated light source and an outlet.

What equipment will be inspected?

The inspector will check the main drop or feed to the building, the main disconnect, the main panel and sub panels as well as all accessible outlets, switches and fixtures. The main panel and sub panels will be checked for improper wiring and fuses or breakers, The outlets will be checked for operation, proper polarity and proper grounding. Minor maintenance and/or repair recommendations are usually made verbally.

What are the most common problems found during an Electrical Certification Inspection?

Exposed wiring, excessive use of extension cords, missing switch and outlet covers, missing junction box covers, and non functioning fixtures are the items that generally draw the appraiser's attention. We also sometimes run into amateur work that can be hazardous such as improper wire splicing, oversized fuses and undersized wires at the main panel and/or sub panels.

What is a Heating Certification?

We need to be able to mark the box on the form that states; "This inspection reveals that the heating system is functioning properly and is capable of furnishing adequate heat for this dwelling." Gas space heaters are required to be "properly installed to assure fixed placement and are properly vented or be equipped with an oxygen depletion valve and UL listed for non-vented use."

What should be done before the inspector goes to the property?

The gas (oil) and electric service will need to be on. All areas of the building(s) need to be accessible and the main furnace area should not have any obstructions blocking it. Forced air and gravity units need to be turned off 1 hour or longer prior to the inspection and hot water or steam units need to be turned on 2 hours prior to the inspection. All air duct vents need to open or all radiators turned on and bled if necessary.

What equipment will be inspected?

Gravity and forced air systems will include an inspection of the main shut off valve, heat exchanger (if visible and accessible), and all venting for air flow and heating temperature.

Gas space heater systems will include an inspection of the main shut off valve, proper venting, and proper placement of the units. Gas space heater gas lines are required to be rigid gas pipe and electric fans, if part of space heater, can not be powered using extension cords.

Hot water or steam systems will include an inspection of the boiler for active leaks, proper gauges, temperature and pressure relief valve and main shut off valve.

All systems will be checked for proper operation of the thermostat(s), proper venting to the chimney, excessive soot build up and proper operation of the draft diverter. Minor maintenance and/or repair recommendations are usually made verbally.

What are the most common problems found during an Heating Certification Inspection?

The number one problem is that the utilities are not on, closely followed by a lack of access to all units in multi-dwelling buildings. The actual problems we find are generally minor, such as radiators that are not furnishing heat because they need to be bled, a blocked air duct, excessive soot build up and improperly adjusted jets causing fouled combustion in the fire box and improper venting. Major problems are rare and include cracked heat exchangers, leaking boilers and defective space heaters or space heaters with flexible gas line feeds.

What is a Plumbing Certification?

We need to be able to mark the box on the form that states; "The plumbing system fixtures appear to be operating properly. The visible piping appears to be in sound condition. The water heater appears to be functioning satisfactorily, and is equipped with a properly installed temperature and pressure relief valve."

What should be done before the inspector goes to the property?

The water, gas and electric service will need to be on. All areas of the building(s) need to be accessible and the water heater should not have any obstructions blocking access to it. All leaking faucets, leaking drains, loose tile and caulking around bathtub shower area, slow drains and inadequate water flow should be repaired prior to the inspection. If you have recently had any water leak(s) repaired or plumbing work done, it would help to provide some form of proof that the work was done. Minor maintenance and/or repair recommendations are usually made verbally.

What equipment will be inspected?

The inspector will check for the proper operation of the main water shut off valve and adequate water flow. The hot water heater will be checked for proper operation, a proper temperature and pressure relief valve and leaks. Every faucet and fixture will need to be checked for leaks, flow, drainage and proper operation. The bathroom shower stalls and tub areas will be inspected to verify they are watertight. The general condition, pitch and venting of any observable piping will also be noted.

What are the most common problems found during an FHA Plumbing Certification Inspection?

The number one problem is that the utilities are not on. Leaking faucets, low water pressure, loose bathroom tiles and/or caulking are also common problems we encounter. Less common are amateur repairs and installations.

What is an FHA Roofing Certification?

We need to be able to mark the box on the form that states; "I certify the entire roof surface, including all roofing and flashing has been closely visually examined and find that the roof is in good condition for it's age, does not leak and has an estimated remaining useful life of over 2 years."

What should be done before the inspector goes to the property?

The inspector will need access to the attic area of the building and the garage, as well as access to the roof area itself. You should make sure there are no missing, loose or broken shingles, temporary patches or anything covering the roofing surface. The vents needs to be clear and all flashing should be in place and properly secured and/or sealed. If there was an active leak(s) that has been repaired, it would help to provide some form of proof that the repair was done. Minor maintenance and/or repair recommendations are usually made verbally.

What should I do if the roof is covered with snow?

The roof covering must be visible for a proper inspection. The inspector will inspect all items except the roof covering and wait for a call stating that the snow has melted and the the roof covering is visible. This process can sometimes be helped along by keeping the inside hatch to the attic open allowing heat from the house to enter the attic or shoveling the snow off the roof. HUD will also allow an escrow of 1.5% of the property value.

What are the most common problems found during an FHA Roofing Certification Inspection?

The number one problem is loose, missing and broken shingles. Loose or missing flashing is the next most common problem. Temporary patches and repairs are also common. When shingles are worn they show excessive signs of cracking, mineral shedding and blistering and need to be replaced to be certified for more than two years.

Will I be able to have a new roof covering put on top of the old one?

The answer is yes and no. You can generally put a new roof covering on top of a roofing system that has one or two previous layers. This depends on the condition of the existing shingles and roofing structure, the weight of the shingles and local codes. A roof that has three covers on it will need to be stripped down to the roofing boards prior to installing a new covering.

When is rolled roofing allowed by FHA?

Rolled roofing is permitted if the previous roof covering was rolled roofing, the neighborhood has other roofs with rolled roofing, the local code permits it and it is installed per manufacturers recommendations.