

City of



RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION PROGRAM



Questions regarding annual fees, scheduled inspections, rental housing issues and inspection reports, please contact Walcott's Building Official – 563-284-6571 ext. 18

For information or questions on other city services contact:
(additional information may also be available at www.cityofwalcott.com)

City Hall
128 W. Lincoln Street
563-284-6571

Code Enforcement
(overgrown grass/weeds, excessive debris/trash, snow removal from sidewalks, etc.)
128 W. Lincoln Street
563-284-6571 ext. 18

GUIDE TO THE CITY OF WALCOTT RENTAL HOUSING CODE

Iowa State Law requires the inspection of all rental housing on a regular basis. In June, 1996, the implementation of the City of Walcott Housing Inspection Program began. Chapter 162 of the City of Walcott's Code of Ordinances was adopted as a means of providing and conserving the housing for the residents of our city.

The housing code enforcement process really begins with your commitment to provide adequate, safe, and sanitary living conditions. It takes the joint effort of investors/owners, tenants, and the City to achieve a viable property maintenance program. It is important to the City, that as a property owner or tenant, you are familiar with health and safety conditions that not only affect an individual's living environment, but the quality of life in our city.

There are many ways the Housing Inspection Program positively impacts the community. By enforcing compliance on a periodic basis, it is less likely that properties will deteriorate to the point where the owner must invest substantial money to repair the property. Those units that are not maintained will be taken out of the market resulting in fairer competition. Owners will not be able to operate substandard rental property. Another benefit is the attraction of renters to Walcott. The inspection program adds a degree of desirability to rent in Walcott versus cities that do not have an inspection program. Those with a choice may have a degree of confidence and trust in the quality of the rental market here that would lead them to rent in Walcott.

This booklet is only a guideline. For complete information you should consult chapter 162 of the City of Walcott's Code of Ordinances. Copies are available at City Hall, 128 W. Lincoln Street, Walcott, Iowa, or on the web at www.cityofwalcott.com.

WHAT IS A RENTAL PROPERTY?

All property occupied by anyone (including family members) other than the legal owner of record, is considered rental property under the law and required to be inspected whether or not rent is collected.

LICENSING PROCEDURES

All structures containing rental dwellings or board rooms must be licensed with the City of Walcott. This license must be renewed biennially. Owners of rental housing will be notified of the expiration of their license(s). Once a property has passed its periodic inspection, a Certificate of Structural Compliance will then be issued. **Residential rental properties that are found to not be in compliance with Walcott's Rental Housing Code will be placed on an annual schedule for inspection and collection of fees.** Both a valid rental license and a Certificate of Structural Compliance are required for each rental unit in the City of Walcott. Failure to obtain both may result in the structure being ordered to be vacated and/or a municipal citation being issued requiring an appearance in Scott County Court.

WHO NEEDS TO BE PRESENT DURING THE INSPECTION?

An owner or designated agent must be present during the inspection. The tenant may be the agent for the owner. The owner has the ultimate responsibility to see that the inspection is complete.

Inspection dates and times can be rescheduled due to just cause. A twenty-four (24) hour notice is required to reschedule an appointment and is at the discretion of the Building Official. Owners/agents who do not show up for a scheduled inspection will be billed \$50.00 for the missed appointment, and the inspection will need to be rescheduled.

VIOLATIONS

Failure to comply with a notice for corrections may result in the owner being charged penalty fees and/or the dwelling unit or structure being required to be vacated and/or a municipal infraction citation being issued requiring an appearance in Scott County Court. Each day a structure is not in compliance with the code is a separate offence and may be separately charged.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

Any person claiming to be aggrieved by a notice issued as a result of an inspection may file a written appeal to the Building Official. Upon receipt of any appeal filed pursuant to this section, the Building Official shall present it at the next regular or special meeting of the City Council. Contact the Building Official for further information on the appeal process.

PERMITS

Permits are required for many projects including remodeling, roofing, siding, fencing, new furnace and/or air conditioning, new water heater, new plumbing fixtures and changes and/or updates to the electrical service and/or wiring. Replacement of electrical outlets, light switches and light fixtures is considered general maintenance and does not require a permit. For information about permits please call the Walcott Building Official at 563-284-6571 ext. 18.

INSPECTION CHECKLIST

The following is a list of basic requirements for all rental housing units. It is recommended that you review this list and conduct your own inspection prior to the Building Official's visit. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all possible violations.

☐ **Garbage and Rubbish**

Are all yard areas free of rubbish and debris? Call Walcott City Hall, 563-284-6571 ext. 10 or Public Works, 563-284-6571 ext. 11, with questions concerning garbage/yard waste collection schedules or to arrange special pick-up of large items.

☐ **Public and Private Sidewalks**

Are the sidewalks and concrete stairs in yards maintained in good repair – no excessive cracking, no changes in elevation of three quarter (3/4) inch or more, no excessive deterioration of the surface? During the winter months are the sidewalks clear of snow and ice accumulation?

☐ **Roof**

Has the roof covering deteriorated? Does the roof leak? Are the sheathing, structural members and overhangs in good repair?

☐ **Chimney**

Are there loose bricks? Is all mortar in place and tight? Is the chimney free of obstruction?

☐ **Gutters and Downspouts**

If installed, is the gutter and downspout system in good repair? Is the water being diverted away from the foundation?

☐ **Exterior Walls**

Are exterior wall members and siding in sound condition and able to prevent the elements (rain, snow, wind, etc.) from penetrating? Are exterior surfaces in need of scraping and painting due to peeling paint exposing surface area to the elements?

☐ **Windows**

Are windows free from breaks or cracks in the glass? Are they reasonably weather tight? Do the windows operate properly to provide ventilation and emergency egress?

☐ **Screens**

Are screens provided on all openable windows? Are all screens free from holes and tears and are the frames free from deterioration? Are screens tight-fitting, large enough to cover the entire window opening and installed on all windows and doors designed for ventilation?

☐ **Doors (Exterior)**

Are all the doors operable and reasonably weather tight? Is the door glass free from breaks or cracks? Are hinges, knobs, locks and closures working properly? Do storm/screen doors have proper closers? Are screens and glass intact with impact resistive glass?

☐ **Doors (Interior)**

Are interior doors leading into a common hallway 20-minute fire resistive solid core doors and are they self closing? Are all interior doors free of damage, close properly and have locks (locks are required on bathroom doors).

☐ **Foundation**

Is the foundation structurally sound? Are there any holes, cracks, crumbling or loose brick, stones or block? Is all mortar in place and tight in joints? Does the exterior finish grade slope away from the building for proper drainage? Are there any areas allowing weather penetration into the foundation or dwelling?

☐ **Accessory Structures**

Are garages and storage sheds maintained in good condition, including paint and electrical wiring?

☐ **Stairways, Porches, and Steps**

Are the stairways, porches, and steps properly constructed and maintained in a safe and sound condition? Are the steps and stairways having more than three risers provided with proper handrails? Do all stairways, porches, decks, and accessible roof areas over 30" from the ground have properly constructed guardrails?

☐ **Rodents, Insects, Pests**

Is there evidence of rodents, roaches, fleas, termites, or other insects or vermin?

☐ **Sanitation**

Is the unit free of excessive debris, clutter, and animal feces? Is the unit being maintained in a sanitary condition (floors clean, unit free of insect or rodent infestation, free of garbage or debris)? Are there any visible mold or mildew issues in the unit(s) or building?

☐ **Adequate Lighting**

Do all habitable rooms contain at least two electrical receptacle outlets and either one switched electrical receptacle outlet or one permanently installed light fixture with wall switch? Do the public hallways, stairways, and cellar/basement area contain adequate electrical lighting? Are all habitable rooms provided with natural light by means of exterior glazed openings (windows) with an area not less than one-tenth of the floor area of such rooms with a minimum of ten square feet?

☐ **Space and Occupancy**

Does every dwelling unit have at least one room which has a minimum floor area of 120 square feet? Do all other habitable rooms, except kitchen and bathroom, have a minimum floor area of 70 square feet with one wall at least 7 (seven) feet in length? *[where more than two people occupy a room used for sleeping purposes, the required floor area shall be increased at a rate of 50 square feet for each occupant over two.]* Are all ceilings a minimum of 7'6" in height?

☐ **Interior Painting**

Are walls, ceilings, windows, doors, and trim in need of plaster repair, scraping, or painting? Is there evidence of water damage?

☐ **Plaster**

Is all interior wall and ceiling plaster intact, including above suspended ceilings?

☐ **Bathrooms**

Do all bathrooms have an operating window or mechanical ventilation, proper plumbing without drips or leaks, sealed tub and shower enclosures, toilets in good working order, sinks that are in good condition without chips or cracks, and one duplex electrical outlet with ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection?

☐ **Floors**

Are the floors structurally sound? Are all floor and stair coverings free from tears and deterioration? Are they able to be maintained in a sanitary condition? Are they being maintained in a sanitary condition?

☐ **Electrical**

Is the electrical system properly fused and maintained in good operating condition? Is the electrical system properly grounded? Has the electrical system been properly installed? Does each habitable room contain at least two electrical receptacle outlets and either one switched electrical receptacle outlet or one permanently installed light fixture with wall switch? Is there an excessive use or abuse of extension cords? Do all outlets, switches, junction boxes, fuse boxes, and service panels have covers? Is the wiring to and within all accessory buildings properly installed?

Are GFCI's provided and functioning correctly in kitchens and bathrooms for all outlets within 6 feet of sinks, tubs and other wet areas?

Note: Prior to 1970, three wire (grounded) electrical systems were not required. The main electrical panel was required to be grounded, but not the devices (receptacles, switches, light fixtures, etc.). In a residential structure that was constructed prior to 1970, and does not have a grounded electrical system, two wire receptacles must be used in areas where GFCI's are not required to be installed (kitchens, bathrooms, etc.). It is against code to install a grounded receptacle where no ground wire is present. GFCI's may be installed in areas where a grounded receptacle is required.

☐ **Mechanical**

Do all gas-fired appliances have a gas shut-off valve located in the same room and within three feet of the appliance? Are all gas-fired appliances in good operating condition and properly vented? Is the heating apparatus capable of maintaining a constant temperature of at least 70 degrees during daytime hours? Do water heaters and boilers have a proper operating pressure relief valve? Is there a pressure relief valve drip leg extending to within 6" of the floor? Is there a gas line drip leg for each appliance?

☐ **Plumbing**

Does the building have adequate water pressure? Do all waste lines drain properly? Is the entire plumbing system free of leaks? Does each dwelling unit have a private three-fixture bathroom (sink, toilet, bathtub /shower)? Are all fixtures properly trapped and vented? Are proper materials being used for potable water and waste lines? [CPVC material is not allowed to be used for supply lines.]

☐ **Egress**

Do all dwelling unit/guest rooms below the third story have their own private/protected egress? Do all dwelling units/guest rooms above the second story have two means of egress remote from each other? Do all sleeping rooms below the first level have a proper means of egress?

☐ **Fire Extinguishers**

Are structures containing three or more units provided with approved type 2A serviceable fire extinguishers in common corridors on each level and the basement? Are extinguishers no more than 75' apart on the same floor? Have they been checked and tagged by a fire equipment service company within the last 12 months?

☐ **Exit Signs**

Exit signs are required in common areas of apartments when two or more exits are required. If required, are they in place? Are they illuminated properly?

☐ **Smoke Detectors / Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

Do all dwelling units/guest rooms have approved, operable smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors for each floor level including the basement? Do common corridors have operable smoke detectors and common monoxide detectors in approved locations? (In residential buildings constructed after 1991, smoke detectors are also required in bedrooms.)

☐ **Combustibles**

Are all areas in structures containing gas-fired appliances free from combustibles and flammable liquids?

RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION FEE SCHEDULE

Fees are due biennially by March 1st. A rental license will be issued to each individual property that is properly registered with the City for which the fee has been received and for which there are no outstanding issues. The rental license shall be valid for two years. Landlords must hold a current license and certificate of structural compliance to rent residential property in the City of Walcott per chapter 162 of Walcott's Code of Ordinances. **Residential rental properties that are found to not be in compliance with Walcott's Rental Housing Code will be placed on an annual schedule for inspection and collection of fees.** All dwelling units and sleeping rooms being let for rent and/or occupancy without a valid rental license with the City and all fees paid may be ordered vacated and/or the owner shall be subject to a citation for a municipal infraction. *(Rental unit applies to any aforementioned unit that is not owner occupied, regardless of whether or not rent is paid by the tenant.)*

The rental license shall be transferable from one owner or agent to another at any time prior to its expiration, termination or revocation. The owner or agent shall notify the City of any change of interest or ownership in the property within thirty (30) days of any conveyance or transfer of interest affecting the property and provide the name and address of all persons who have acquired an interest therein.

In the event the City has not been notified of such conveyance or transfer within the designated period of time, the rental license may be transferred from one owner or agent to another upon payment of a fee, the amount of which shall be established by resolution of the City Council. The fees shall be assessed to the new owner or agent.

All units are on a regular inspection cycle. Additional inspections may occur, as necessary, to follow up on complaints. Re-inspections are generally approximately 30 days after prior inspections. Life, health, and safety related violations will be on a shorter inspection or re-inspection time frame.

LICENSE/INSPECTION FEES (covers the cost of the initial inspection and one (1) re-inspection, if needed, within 90 days) **

1 (one) unit	\$35.00
2 (two) units under one roof	\$50.00
3 (three) units under one roof	\$65.00
4 (four) units under one roof	\$80.00
5 (five) units under one roof	\$95.00
6 (six) units under one roof	\$110.00
Each additional unit over 6 under one roof	\$110.00 + \$15.00 for each unit over 6

(Owner occupied units are exempt from fees. Subtract \$15.00 from total.)

MISCELLANEOUS ADDITIONAL CHARGES

Additional Re-inspection Fee	\$50.00
No Show Fee	\$50.00
Late Cancellation Fee (24 hours or less prior to inspection)	\$50.00
Appeal Filing Fee (special city council meeting required)	\$250.00 non-refundable

**** Incentive:** *If at any time a residential rental property is found in noncompliance with Walcott's Rental Housing Code, the Certificate of Structural Compliance may be revoked or modified to reflect the compliance of each separate dwelling unit or sleeping room within a structure, and the property placed on an annual schedule for inspection and collection of fees.*

