

# UPCS GUIDANCE & PROTOCOL CLARIFICATIONS

Effective date: May 23, 2016

The following guidance and clarifications are provided as part of REACs continuing effort to minimize the variances in the application of the UPCS protocols and definitions.

## **Site: Overgrown Vegetation-**

- Are weeds and grass overgrown in an area of the property that is not in use a defect or not? (e.g. see photo below - a strip of land between the driveway and property fence) No defect



- There is some vegetation touching a fence but it is not causing any damage. Is this a defect? No defect.

## **Site: Erosion-**

- Here are two actual examples of what inspectors are recording as erosion. Neither of these meets our definition of erosion and should not have been recorded.



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## **Building Exterior:**

- Stains on exterior walls? The defect for a staining on a wall is only applied to “intended painted surfaces”. Such as wood siding – not vinyl, aluminum, or brick.
- Is it a defect if the dryer vent exhaust has missing slates or openings in the exhaust cover plate mounted on the exterior wall? Yes – It is considered a penetration and is recorded as a hole in the wall.

## **Common Areas:**

- Fire walls between townhouse units – Do we assess these differently? No – These are not inspected as part of the “Building Systems - Fire Protection”.
- Properties are permitted to use double sided deadbolts only in common areas that residence do not have access to? False. Properties can use double sided deadbolts in all common areas that are not in the direct path of the unit egress from the building.

## **Building Systems:**

- Is a handicap chair lift or a stair lift considered an elevator? Yes. Any conveyance system is considered an elevator. In instances where these conveyance systems are not inspected, the property staff shall demonstrate to the inspector, that the chair lift or stair lift performs each function as designed by the manufacturer.

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- Inspection of Zip Ties: Should we test the integrity of plastic zip ties used to secure electrical enclosures? If the inspector sees a reason why they should be tested (e.g. sun baked, color is worn and faded, etc.) and when tested it breaks off in their hands and exposes bare electrical wiring or connections to be exposed, it is a defect. Otherwise, if the zip ties breaks when tested, but no bare wiring or connections are exposed, it is not a defect. This does not imply that every zip tie on every property has to be tested. Professional common sense must be applied for this situation on a case-by-case basis.

## **Unit:**

- The shower head leaks when the water is turned on but does not leak when the water is off. Is this a defect? Yes. It is a defect and shall be recorded as a L1 if contained and a L3 if not contained.
- The showerhead is missing. Is this a defect or not? It is a defect for missing hardware.
- If the mechanical sink stopper is inoperable is it a L1 – sink stopper defect or a L3 – hardware defect? It is a L1 – sink stopper defect.
- Upon entering the bathroom, the inspector observed that the water is turned off to the sink and/or toilet. Is this a defect? If the water cutoff valve under a sink or behind the toilet is turned off, the inspector **can** allow the property rep to turn on the valve to allow proper testing of the sink or toilet.

## **Entry Door:**

- If entry door has never had a seal installed and day light is observed under the frame, is this a defect? No

## **Self-Latching Doors:**

- Is it acceptable for inspectors to allow the property representative to remove door sweeps and items hanging from hooks on self-closing doors during the inspection? If a resident has added a door sweep or wreath hanger, our protocol

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allows the resident or POA to remove the item to demonstrate that the door closer works properly.

- How many times should an inspector attempt to open/close a “self-closing” door? Two attempts shall be made varying the angle of the opened door (e.g. 45 degrees, 90, degrees, etc.). If after two attempts the door does not latch it is a defect.
- Can the resident or POA assist the “self-closing” doors function by raising/closing windows using airflow to assist? No. Do not allow a resident or a POA to open a window to get a door to shut. The door should work when the windows are opened or closed.
- During the inspection, can the POA or the inspector repair the door hardware on a bi-fold door (e.g. replace the pin in the top track)? No. It is a defect.
- You observe a missing strike plate on the door frame but the door latches and stay’s secure. It is a defect? Yes, it is a defect for door hardware and the level is based on the type of door.

## **Unit: Electrical System-**

- Tripped Breakers: Is there a protocol to provide for the property to reset a tripped breaker for electrical devices or equipment?

**Disposals:** If the garbage disposal is tripped the inspector will allow the POA to press the reset button; if it works there is no deficiency. However, if the POA has to use any tools to make repairs to the garbage disposal, it is a defect.

**GFI's:** Must be tested and reset by the inspector per the CB.

**Tripped Breaker:** The POA can reset a tripped breaker as long as the breaker does not affect a life safety item such as a call-for-aid or smoke detector and there will be no deficiency observed.

*Note: The inspector should never turn on any breaker that is found to be in the “off” or “tripped” position, since he/she is not sure what appliance or dangerous condition that it might create (e.g. turns on stove). The POA should be given the option to turn on any breakers that are off. The exception to this is the testing of the GFCI and AFCI protected breakers.*

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- If a garbage disposal is missing the plate underneath it, is this recorded as exposed wires? If it exposes bare wires and/or bare connections it is an electrical defect.
- Unplugged Appliances: Do we need to verify whether an unplugged appliance, such as a dryer, is in use or not? The Inspector must use their best judgement based for this situation.
- Can caulk be used anywhere in the panel/fuse box? No. This is a defect. The introduction of a foreign material into this type of device is not an acceptable repair. It shall be recorded in the appropriate inspectable area as an “H&S – Electrical Hazard” under “Opening in the electrical panel are **not** properly covered”.

## **Unit: HVAC-**

- If the HVAC system has holes in it from the manufacturer, can this be considered exposed wires? If the holes expose bare wires and/or bare connections it is an electrical defect.
- What should the inspector do if the window air conditioner in a unit is unplugged? The inspector shall allow the property representative to plug it in and then test it for correct operation. (HVAC is seasonable)

## **Unit: Kitchen Items-**

- The range hood exhaust fan is missing the filter. Is it a defect? Yes, it is a defect. (Inoperable –L3)
- Is aluminum foil in the oven or on the stove top a defect? No defect
- Is a pizza box, plastic bags, etc., stored in the oven a defect? Yes. It is recorded as Hazards- Other.
- What should the inspector do if the stove in a unit is unplugged? The inspector will allow the property representative to plug it in and then inspect the stove for correct operation.
- How do we inspect kitchen sink sprayers? The sink sprayer is only evaluated for leaks. If it is not present; it is not a defect.

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## **Unit: Windows-**

- Are thumb latches suitable substitutes for window locks? Yes. As long as they can be operated without the use of a tool.
- Are sash pins (with or without a chain) suitable substitutes for defective balances? Yes. But they must be tested to ensure they function.
- Some inspectors allow the escort to operate the windows, especially if they are difficult or the inspector fears damaging the window. Is this allowed? The inspector shall operate all windows except those that are not accessible due to a large bed blocking access or the window is elevated. In each of these cases the inspector must observe the window being tested, either by the escort or the resident.
- What level of effort must an inspector expend to open a window before determining it is inoperable and/or a blocked egress? The Inspector must use their own professional judgment to determine if the level of effort to open a window constitutes a deficiency for being inoperable and/or a blocked egress.

## **Unit: Health & Safety-**

- A window AC unit is installed in the only window in a bedroom, but it is **not** secured to the window frame or sash. Is this a defect? Yes. It is recorded as a blocked egress regardless if it is secured to the window or not.
- Can a broken child's toy with a sharp edge be recorded as a defect? Yes. Hazard - other. (E.g., Resident owned personal property that's broken. See Comp. Bulletin.)
- Below is a photo of a hasp lock, this lock is on the unit entry door. Is it a blocked egress? It is a blocked egress. (All blockages that limit a person's ability to exit a room in case of emergency are a deficiency. Unlike a thumb turn deadbolt this has the potential to be pad locked.) Professional common sense and inspector knowledge are to be applied.

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- How do you record the defect when bed bugs are observed in a unit? The inspector **will** record as an “H&S – Hazards Other “ defect, and make the comment that bed bugs exist in the unit. Currently, you **will not** record bed bugs as an “H&S- Infestation” defect.

## **General Questions Concerning the UPCS Inspections:**

- Vacant units are now included in the sample. True (but not always) – for some HFA inspections and all MF properties with a vacancy rate of 15% or more the vacant units, if selected in sample, are inspected.
- Do we inspect vacant units that are still in the process of being repaired before renting? Yes and all defects are recorded in accordance with the CB guidance concerning “Work in Progress”.
- A certified inspector is no longer permitted to be hired to “shadow” and cannot be on the property while the inspection is being conducted. True – this is part of the new IA Business rules.