CTQ – A Key Concept Under NSPIRE

CTQ means “Critical to Quality.” It is the designation we are using for defects in the built environment that are most important to the habitability of the property being inspected. NSPIRE focuses on identifying the deficiencies most critical to housing quality.

The CTQ concept establishes what is within scope as an inspectable item. The NSPIRE program identifies CTQ deficiencies, which are listed in the NSPIRE standards. The NSPIRE program also includes CTQ inspections where inspectors are looking for CTQ deficiencies.

The CTQ designation is linked to another critical component of NSPIRE, the rationale. Every CTQ deficiency in the NSPIRE system must have a clearly expressed and well-supported statement of why that deficiency is Critical to Quality.

Determining What Is CTQ

In reviewing defects in the built environment, HUD is looking to see if the deficiency is Critical to Quality, i.e., critical to habitability and the health and safety of the resident. Some of the questions HUD asks in determining a CTQ deficiency are:

• if a resident could become injured because of this defect, or
• if, as a result of this defect, the resident is unable to use certain fixtures, features, or appliances, which are reasonably assumed to be part of their rent, or
• if the defect should be identified through corrective, routine, or preventative maintenance activities.

The answer to these questions can be found within each NSPIRE standard. Each deficiency within a standard has a rationale that explains why HUD considers the deficiency to be Critical to Quality.

View the deficiencies that are Critical to Quality within the NSPIRE standards: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac/nspire/standards
CTQ Deficiency Categories

Under NSPIRE, CTQ deficiencies are grouped into three categories. They are health and safety, function and operability, and condition and appearance. Health and safety make up most of the deficiencies in the standards because CTQ deficiencies are focused on the most critical elements that impact resident safety and habitability. The other two categories of function and operability and condition and appearance deficiencies will make up a much smaller portion of CTQ deficiencies. These new categories allow HUD to focus on the most important defects and conditions to support healthy and safe homes.

The first and most critical type of deficiency is **health and safety**. These are risks that pose potential danger to residents. There are two main categories of health and safety deficiencies: standard and severe. The severe category is broken down into life-threatening and non-life-threatening. These represent the most critical elements affecting the health and safety of the resident.

A **function and operability** deficiency eliminates or critically reduces an object’s usability, but the deficiency alone is not likely to directly harm a resident. This category of deficiency may be evaluated in the context of basic expectations of fixtures and other components in a dwelling, which, while not health and safety issues, are fundamental expectations of habitability.

This deficiency may be citable when a resident would incur additional costs because of this condition; for example, a sink that is constantly running. A function and operability deficiency may increase the resident’s utility bill significantly if not corrected. These deficiencies require repair based on the property’s routine maintenance plan.

A **condition and appearance** deficiency is not likely to harm a resident, nor does it critically reduce or eliminate an object’s usability. Note that other, less significant “appearance” deficiencies, such as peeling non-lead-based paint inside a unit, may not be included. This category of deficiency requires repair based on property’s routine maintenance plan.

These new categories allow HUD to focus on the defects and factors to support healthy and safe homes.

Check out the CTQ Deficiencies and the Deficiency Rationales factsheets for more information.

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CTQ Deficiencies Factsheet

Deficiency Rationales Factsheet