

Healthy Homes Standards

Submission from
Dated

Quinovic Group Office
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1.1 Where in the home should landlords be required to provide heating?

Options Summary: location of the heating device in a rental home	
Option One (status quo)	Living room only (includes kitchen and dining room if open plan rental home)
Option Two	Living room (includes kitchen and dining room if open plan rental home) and bedrooms
Questions for your feedback:	
	Do you support option one or two for the location of heating devices that landlords must provide in rental homes? Please explain your reason.
Option One. Tenants have the ability to plug in portable heating solutions of their choice in other rooms at their cost.	

1.3 What achievable indoor temperature should heating devices be sized for?

Options Summary: indoor temperature that heating devices should be sized for in a rental home	
Option One	Heaters that landlords provide must be capable of achieving an indoor temperature of at least 18°C in rooms applicable to the heating standard
Option Two	Heaters that landlords provide must be capable of achieving an indoor temperature of at least 20°C in rooms applicable to the heating standard
Questions for your feedback:	
	Do you support option one or two above on whether landlords should provide heating devices that are capable of reaching 18°C or 20°C in room(s) covered by the heating standard? Please explain.
Option One. This is consistent with the WHO standards for the general population.	

1.4 Should landlords only be required to provide heating devices where portable electric heaters are insufficient to achieve the required indoor temperature?

Options Summary: heating devices landlords should provide in rental homes

Option One	Landlords only provide (fixed) heating devices in cases where portable electric heaters are insufficient to heat the required rooms
Option Two	Landlords must provide fixed and portable heating devices to heat the required rooms

Questions for your feedback:

Do you support option one or two for heating devices to be provided by a landlord in a rental home?

Option One. This provides flexibility to the tenant on heating solutions and reduced cost to the landlord (and hence lower rent charged).

1.5 Should we accept some heating devices, and not others?

Questions for your feedback:

Do you agree that a class of acceptable heating devices is created for those devices that are efficient, healthy and affordable for the heating standard? Please explain.

Yes. There are benefits to both landlord and tenant (see below).

Do you agree that the heating devices listed above (un-flued heaters, open fires etc) should be not acceptable for the heating standard? Please explain.

Yes. Un-flued gas heaters can release toxic gas and contribute to moisture build up. If properties are not properly ventilated by tenants this can damage property, cause mould and sickness. It is in the best interest of both landlord and tenant to ban un-flued gas heaters.

What other types of heating, if any, do you think should be acceptable or not acceptable in the heating standard? Why?

Nothing to add.

2.1 What minimum level of insulation should be required in rental homes?

Table 1: The proposed options for a minimum level of ceiling and underfloor insulation in rental homes for the insulation standard

Options	Ceiling requirements	Underfloor requirements
Option One (status quo + continue)	Insulation installed before 1 July 2016 must be replaced or ‘topped up’ if below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum R-value of 1.9, or 1.5 if in a building of high thermal mass construction 	Insulation installed before 1 July 2016 must be replaced or ‘topped up’ if below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.9
	Installed from 1 July 2016 + continue from 1 July 2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.9 if the home is located in zones 1 or 2 • 3.3 if located in zone 3 	Installed from 1 July 2016 + continue from 1 July 2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.3
Option Two (akin to “2001 Building Code”)	Existing insulation must be replaced or ‘topped up’ if below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.9 if the home is located in zones 1 or 2 • 2.5 if located in zone 3 	Existing insulation must be replaced or ‘topped up’ if below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.3
	All new insulation installed must be at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.9 if the home is located in zones 1 or 2 • 3.3 if located in zone 3 	All new insulation installed must be at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.3
Option Three (akin to “2008 Building Code”)	All existing and new insulation must be at least:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.9 if the home is located in zones 1 or 2 • 3.3 if located in zone 3 	All existing and new insulation must be at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.3

Questions for your feedback:

Which of the options (one, two or three) for the minimum level of insulation required do you support? Please explain.

It is estimated that there are still many thousands of properties that do not currently meet the requirements for 1 July 2019. It is also estimated that it will take some time (potentially beyond 1 July 2019) to bring all these properties up to standard. While ideally all houses would have insulation as per option three (2008 building code) it is unrealistic to expect this in the medium term. A graduated approach (time wise) to get all rental properties up to 2001 code is a more achievable goal.

Do you agree that the exceptions set out in the 2016 regulations should continue under the proposed insulation standard (e.g. when it is not reasonably practicable to install insulation)? Please explain.

Yes. If it is not reasonably practical then it becomes very difficult (potentially impossible) to install insulation. Ultimately, tenants will gravitate to a house that suits their insulation needs.

Do you think any other requirements for insulation should be included in the standard and, if so, what?

No.

Would any of the above options inhibit future innovation and/or flexibility? If so, how?

Any option that requires landlords to insulate above the current minimum standard arguably inhibits their flexibility as to how they wish to manage their property.

2.2 How should the degradation of insulation under “reasonable condition” be assessed?

Table 2: Minimum thickness of existing ceiling insulation under “reasonable condition” option one

Minimum level of insulation (see section 2.1)	Minimum R-value when originally installed	Minimum thickness for ceiling insulation”	Estimated additional number of rental homes requiring a ceiling insulation upgrade compared to 2016 regulations
Option one (status quo)	1.9	70 mm	0
Option two (2001 insulation standard)	1.9 – 2.5	70 – 90mm	10,000
Option three (2008 insulation standard)	2.9 – 3.3	100 – 120 mm	80,000

Table 3: Minimum thickness of existing ceiling insulation under “reasonable condition” option two

Minimum level of insulation (see section 2.1)	Minimum R-value when originally installed	Minimum thickness for ceiling insulation	Estimated additional number of rental homes requiring a ceiling insulation upgrade compared to 2016 regulations
Option one (status quo)	1.9	90 mm	40,000
Option two (2001 insulation standard)	1.9 – 2.5	90 – 120 mm	70,000
Option three (2008 insulation standard)	2.9 – 3.3	140 – 160 mm	190,000

Questions for your feedback

Do you support option one or two to assess a “reasonable condition” for insulation? Please explain.

Option One. The alternative will create significant cost for landlords, which will inevitably be passed onto tenants via increased rental.

Do you think any other criteria for interpreting “reasonable condition” of insulation should be included and, if so, what?

No. I think R ratings and thickness are the most appropriate measures.

2.3 How can landlords show compliance with the insulation standard?

We seek your feedback on how landlords can show compliance with the insulation standard.

The HHG Act allows for records or other documents to be retained by a landlord.⁸⁸ We propose that a landlord is required to retain a record to show compliance with the standard. Options for potential records include:

- the R-value when the insulation was installed
- a record of Building Code compliance and the level of insulation
- a suitably qualified and experienced assessor has certified compliance with the insulation standard.

Questions for your feedback:

Do you agree landlords should show compliance with the insulation standard by retaining particular records? If so, which records should be retained? Please explain.

Yes. All landlords should obtain a certificate of insulation from an appropriately qualified and independent third party. In that way tenants can have confidence that the insulation set out in their tenancy agreement accords with that actually in the property.

3.1 What level of ventilation is required in rental homes?

Option Summary: Appropriate ventilation for landlords to provide	
Option One (status quo)	<p>Every bathroom has at least one window that directly opens to the outside air unless other adequate means of ventilation are provided to the satisfaction of the local authority</p> <p>Each habitable room has at least one window that directly opens to the outside air unless other adequate means of ventilation are provided to the satisfaction of the local authority</p> <p>Every room which is not a habitable room shall be provided with such window or windows as the local authority may consider necessary for adequate ventilation</p>
Option Two	<p>Extractor fans installed in rooms with a <i>bath or shower</i>, and living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms have windows that can be opened for the entry of air unless an exemption applies</p>
Option Three	<p>Extractor fans installed in rooms with a <i>bath or shower or indoor cooktop</i>, and living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms have windows that can be opened for the entry of air unless an exemption applies</p>

Questions for your feedback:

Do you support option one, two or three to provide adequate ventilation in rental homes? Please explain.

Option two; extractor fans in the bath and shower with opening windows in other rooms.

What other forms of ventilation should be considered acceptable, or not included in the standard as acceptable? Please explain.

Nothing to add.

Do you agree that exemptions should be available for certain rental homes from requiring openable windows?

Exemptions should certainly be available for health and safety reasons.

Would any of the above proposed options for ventilation prevent future innovation and / or flexibility? If yes, how?

The requirement to provide externally vented fans for bathrooms and kitchen may be difficult depending on the layout of the property and the type of construction.

4.1 How should landlords protect rental homes against moisture entering the home and inadequate drainage?

Option Summary: Moisture ingress and drainage

Option One (status quo)	Landlords continue to meet the requirements of the Building Code, Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Improvement Regulations
Option Two	Landlords provide efficient drainage and guttering, downpipes and drains and ensure that the subfloor has a ground moisture barrier, unless there is already adequate subfloor ventilation

Questions for your feedback

Do you support option one or two above to address the problems identified with moisture ingress and inadequate drainage in New Zealand rental homes? Why/Why not?

Option One.

Do you think other requirements for moisture ingress and drainage should be included in the standard? If so, what?

No.

Do you agree with the proposed exemptions? Do you think there are other homes that should also be exempt?

Yes, I agree with the exemptions.

Would any of the above options inhibit future innovation and/or flexibility? How do you suggest this could be overcome?

No.

5.1 What is the appropriate level of draught stopping to create warm and dry rental homes?

Option: Draught stopping

Option One (status quo)

Landlords are required to ensure walls and ceilings of every habitable room, bathroom, kitchen or kitchenette, hall and stairway shall be sheathed, plastered, rendered or otherwise treated and shall be maintained to the satisfaction of the local authority. Every floor shall be kept in a good state of repair free from crevices, holes and depressions

Option Two

Landlords to stop any unnecessary gaps or holes that cause noticeable draughts and a colder rental home, and:

- are 3 millimetres or greater in and around windows and doors, walls, ceilings, floors and access hatches
- block any decommissioned chimneys and fireplaces.

Questions for your feedback:

Do you support option one or two above to stop draughts and create warm and dry rental homes? Why?

I would support steps to reduce draughts in homes, particularly older homes that are unusually draughty. I am unsure if restricting gaps to 3mm is the most appropriate measure as I am not an expert in this area. Blocking chimneys could create an unnecessary fire risk if tenants are unaware that they have been blocked and decide to use the fire place. Blocking fire places may interfere with the ascetic feel of the home.

Do you think other requirements for draught stopping should be included in the standard? If so, what?

Homes with severe draft issues should be remediated, however, a lot of mould issues are caused by tenants not ventilating their houses properly and this can be accentuated where homes are completely (or substantially) air tight.

Would any of the above options inhibit future innovation and / or flexibility? If so, how?

No.

Should the regulations specify any exceptions to this standard? If so, what?

No.

6. Date to comply with the standards

Option	Implementation
Option One	Landlords must comply with the standards within 90 days of the start or renewal of a tenancy
Option Two	A single date is chosen for when all landlords must comply with the standards
Option Three	The implementation dates are staggered for the standards either by <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard• Rental home location

Questions for your feedback:

Do you support option one, two or three above for the date that landlords need to comply with the standards for their rental homes? Why/why not?

I think a single date is the simplest option provided sufficient time is given so that any remedial work can be undertaken.

For option one, do you think 1 July 2021 is the appropriate commencement date? Why / why not? Do you agree landlords should be given a grace period of 90 days between the start of a tenancy and when they need to comply?

I prefer option two.

For option two, do you think 1 July 2022 is an appropriate date to allow landlords, industry and government with sufficient time to comply with the standards? If not, which date do you think would be appropriate, and why?

Yes, provided that the exact requirements are known well in advance of this so that work can be completed. Inevitably a fixed date will result in a last-minute rush to complete the work so incentives could be offered for early completion.

For option three, which approach do you think is an appropriate way to stagger implementation (by standard or location)? Do you have an alternative approach to staggering implementation that you think we should consider?

Staggering (say by age of house with older houses completed first) may have some benefits, however, this may cause some confusion to landlords with multiple properties of differing ages.

Is there a feasible compliance date option that has not been considered? Please explain

A later compliance date will be preferred by some landlords so that they can put off the work, which is why I think incentives should be offered for early completion.

General question for your feedback

Do you agree with the assumptions and analysis in the document for the indicative costs and benefits, and our analysis of the advantages and disadvantages?

I am not an expert but the analysis appears to be thorough from a lay perspective.

7.1 Enforcing the standards

Questions for your feedback

What records should a landlord retain to show compliance with each healthy home standard (e.g. R-value certification for the insulation standard)?

I think that depends on the final outcome of the review but there should at least be a checklist that is signed off by the landlord and available to the tenant that demonstrates that standards have been met. This could be supplemented with external sign off (eg assessor of insulation) where appropriate.

What could be included on the tenancy agreement to show the landlord has complied with each healthy home standard (e.g. a description of the mechanical ventilation supplied in the kitchen and bathroom for the ventilation standard)?

See above, a standardised checklist perhaps detailing relevant information backed up with external certificates where appropriate.

7.2 Online tool to assist landlords comply with the standards

Questions for your feedback

What are the most important considerations in developing a tool to help tenants understand and landlords to comply with the heating standard?

A simple easy to follow check list of final requirements should suffice.