

**0:00:00.5 John Rowland:** Okay, good afternoon everyone, and welcome to HUD's Best Practices During COVID-19 webinar series. My name is John Rowland, and I'm here on behalf of HUD and IEM, and we will discuss resuming inspections, deferred maintenance and work order backlog. The housekeeping, I'm going to ask you to please remain muted during the webinar unless invited to unmute. Questions can be answered in the Q&A section throughout the presentation and will be addressed at the end and at intervals during the webinar. This webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the HUD Exchange webinar website at a later date.

**0:00:48.2 JR:** So, our agenda today: We have introduction and our learning objectives. The introduction is, we have with us Helen Phelps and a representative from HUD, and we have some SME folks in the webinar today. And we're hoping that we get some conversation, we hope that what you're hearing gives you some information and gives you some ideas of what other folks are doing, and this is a great opportunity to share what's been going on during this pandemic. The learning objectives: How PHAs can work with residents to gain access to units for inspection and maintenance, how to prepare to resume annual inspections, approaches for assessing deferred maintenance and work order backlogs, and how to maintain safety for maintenance staff and residents and comply with health guidelines.

**0:01:50.5 JR:** Challenges presented due to the pandemic: Maintenance not allowed into units due to health and safety concerns. This happens to all of us; at-risk populations residing within the properties, deficiencies have been unreported, routine maintenance has not been completed, increased wear and tear on units and systems due to residents spending an increased amount of time at home during the pandemic. So, we're going to take a poll. I'm going to start off with this poll. Residents allowing access to units. How have you found residents hesitant to call maintenance staff or have maintenance enter the unit?

[pause]

**0:03:53.3 JR:** So, during the question, "Have you found residents hesitant to call maintenance staff or have maintenance enter the unit?" We have 16 out of 35 say, "Yes", six out of 35 say "No", and "No answer" 13 out of 35. So, the majority of us have had issues with resident's hesitancy to allow us in to do what we do best and that's maintain the health and safety of not only the residents, but the unit itself. What are the most common reasons why residents are hesitant to call maintenance?

**0:04:49.5 Helen Phelps:** This is just an opportunity for folks to go ahead and unmute yourself if you wanna share some of your experience during the pandemic with folks allowing maintenance into units.

**0:05:00.8 JR:** And I know we have a lot, I visited many, many housing authorities over the last year, and the reasons are abundant. You can share them here.

[pause]

**0:05:53.7 JR:** Possible challenges to accessing units. Family member recovering from COVID-19, members of households may be fearful of COVID and some members that just might be in a high-risk population. Lack of understanding of awareness of the agency's COVID protocols when technicians need to enter units. One of the most common I find is that family members are fearful of allowing folks into their units, not understanding COVID-19 altogether, and just taking the action and a lot of precautions to protect their family members. If they have someone recovering from COVID-19, they really, really want to make sure that that person is safe and will probably maintain a very, very strict protocol around who may enter and who may leave the unit. And then the lack of understanding of the awareness of the agency of COVID protocols. Sometimes there are folks, there

could be a language issue, there could be just a general communication issue and residents are not sure how, you, as an agency, are coping with and dealing with COVID-19 protocols, so they may be unsure of the efficacy or unsure of the real plan and whether it will really work, and they just rather just not have anyone enter the unit. Next slide.

**0:07:34.0 JR:** So working with residents to gain access to units. Campaign as to the importance of inspections and routine maintenance, health and safety quality of the unit for the long-term. Communicate safety protocols that are in place, in other words communicate in advance before resuming routine inspections. Engage with resident advisory councils, you work with accounts to establish plan to some operations. Of course, this is all about communication, how well your agency has set up a viable communication protocol to help residents understand the importance of continuing maintenance, continuing communication with the agency, and making sure that they don't create even more or even worse health situations within the unit by not reporting health and safety issues within your unit. Next.

**0:08:36.1 JR:** So poll, has your PHA effectively communicated COVID-19 protocols and assurance to residents that their safety is your top priority? This is all about communicating. It's all about communication, it's all about making sure that not only you, but your residents are safe.

[pause]

**0:10:27.0 JR:** "So, has your agency had an effective protocol set up?" And we have 20 out of the 36 say "Yes," two say "No," so obviously we've taken this very seriously, and we've worked very hard to make sure that our residents feel safe, and that our communication efforts are effective. Communication with residents. Communicate safety protocols in place, provide communication well in advance of resuming routine inspection activities, post information about PHA safety

protocols on PHA websites, community boards, etcetera, and update upgrade communication methods. Robocalls, text notifications, social media, and the PHA website are always good avenues to use to make sure that your communication with residents is timely. So, another call, share with us. Tell us more about your PHA's communications plan, methods used, ease of access to communication for HAs, and collecting feedback from resident services or resident councils. So if anyone wants to share that information it'd be great.

[pause]

**0:12:58.4 JR:** Okay, so we'll move on to preparing for annual inspections. You wanna access the status of annual inspections or any completed during the pandemic, those not completed, how long since they were inspected. You wanna prioritize those that are the most past due or likely to receive the most wear such as family units. Clearly, every day when we look at our work orders, when we work normally looking at work orders, we always did triage. We always prioritized those that were emergencies and those that were prioritized in terms of need and health and safety. It's very difficult to do that when you're not able to enter the unit.

**0:13:45.2 JR:** So even though you had a difficulty communicating with the resident, were any completed? Were able to do that, and what percentage? Did you lose a number of percentage based on the lack of ability to get into units? Was it not the same? Did residents call you and say, "Look, I would like to have my annual inspection done, but I would prefer to wait?" You wanna prioritize based on all of those factors. You wanna create a schedule for completing inspections. You wanna balance schedules to insure tech is available to address emergencies, health and safety efficiencies, etcetera, while working through backlog. That's a balancing act that everyone is struggling with. You have a couple of factors, one, you may in fact have your own staff that are dealing with COVID, and so your staffing capacity is diminished. You may have supply issues. We've all had

issues with supplies coming in and making it difficult for us to have the... Obtain the proper materials needed to do our work. So it's difficult sometimes to address emergencies.

**0:15:03.0 JR:** You wanna schedule around the lack of staffing, you wanna schedule around those staff members who may feel hesitant around entering units. We understand that we're looking here at the tenant response to COVID, but we also have to consider our staff response to COVID, when we're asking them to go into these units. Which goes back to what we talked about earlier, about the importance of having a protocol that is understood by not only the residents, but by your staff as well. Next.

**0:15:38.6 JR:** Preparing for annual inspections. Again, prepare for increased need for supplies, parts and materials to complete the additional backlog. Communities still face material shortages, prices increases and lack of available contractors. We know here in the Northeast, just a simple cost of a piece of sheet rock went from \$15 to almost \$80 in just a four-month period. The shortage is real. The need to get the supplies for sanitation almost doubled in price, makes it difficult to get large amounts. You have to buy smaller and smaller amounts or less and less of that material because of the shortage.

**0:16:23.1 JR:** Stock maintenance staff with parts that they can correct EHS deficiencies during the inspection as well as make minor repairs while they're in the unit. Always the plan, very difficult when you have a shortage of materials. Ensure inspections are properly documented. Here we're gonna have a discussion about NSPIRE and how NSPIRE standards fit into your preparing for annual inspections during COVID. So we'll let the SMEs from HUD take over and discuss NSPIRE standards.

**0:17:11.8 Donna:** So there's two folks... This is Donna and Tim from REAC here. And during this

time, we hope that you begin to familiarize your staff and your maintenance staff with the NSPIRE standards. You can go out to the REAC website or you can just Google on NSPIRE standards. There's a whole NSPIRE wall pages of the rules under the REAC website where all the standards are listed. It discusses all the notices, it discusses the economic grow fact, which is the rule bringing those standards to an implementation piece. Tim Wise is on here. Also, Tim, do you have anything else to add to that?

**0:17:56.3 Tim:** Yes, Donna, this is Tim and once I got my head right, yeah, with NSPIRE we've said that we would ask for the self-inspections to be submitted electronically back to HUD. And we've not provided the guides back out to the demo participants on how to do that yet. But that's not to say that they certainly should not submit their self-inspection in accordance with the way they've been doing business previously. Because if you... Even in the notice, one of the things that we said is that we want to work with the demo participants in the best practice committee of self-inspection. So certainly, you need to familiarize yourself with the standards that are on the website, but those are primarily gonna be used for two things.

**0:18:49.6 Tim:** One would be the normal REAC inspection, the periodic REAC inspections that REAC would perform, as well as your... The ACV inspections. If you're participating in the ACV demonstration, then those standards would apply in that demonstration as well. But if you're not in either the NSPIRE demo or the ACV demo, continue to use your HQS inspections for the voucher inspections and will continue to use either, UBCS if you're not in the NSPIRE demo, there are some inspections that HUD is doing from REAC that are using the NSPIRE standards outside of the demo because they're primarily with high risk properties and will primarily be looking for health and safety concerns in the inspections that the PHAs would be notified as to which inspection they are going to receive. I hope that helps.

**0:20:11.1 JR:** Yeah, that's interesting, I know that on the NSPIRE they change the sort of the scope and the perspective on how inspections are gonna change in the future, once the NSPIRE is made a standard format, would there be any way that a PHA could look at NSPIRE and decide that, we need to do the same reporting that we do for other inspection models, but is there something, in NSPIRE that would provide a mechanism by which they could prioritize or re-prioritize the types of inspections that are gonna be done during COVID?

**0:21:06.9 Tim:** I'm not sure I can...

**0:21:10.1 JR:** So guess what I'm saying is, you have a... When work orders are prepared or when annual inspections are being prepared, internally there's usually a mechanism that will assist the PHA in prioritizing the types of inspections that need to be done and maybe even changing the timing of annual inspections. Is there anything that NSPIRE that they could use for that?

**0:21:41.6 Tim:** No, I don't think so. And especially if you're talking in terms of the self inspections...

**0:21:46.3 JR:** Right.

**0:21:46.3 Tim:** Because that's what we... If you're talking self inspections, and that's one of the things you don't necessarily wanna do is be overly prescriptive if you will.

**0:21:55.5 JR:** Okay.

**0:21:56.4 Tim:** So that we're not placing a new burden on the PHA.

**0:22:01.1 JR:** Okay.

**0:22:01.7 Tim:** And we want them to revive for, basically that they operate best practice, right?

And make sure or make this part of a routine. So in other words, what we wanna have happen is basically save up all the stuff till the end of the year, right? Probably the preference would be to be able to go through, throughout the year and inspect the property throughout the year, and then eventually the intent would be that a PHA could after our own discretion, right? Be able to submit the results of their self inspection either incrementally, in a let's say, once a month, if you will.

**0:22:45.1 JR:** Yup.

**0:22:46.0 Tim:** Or save it up till the end of the year and submit the whole thing at the end of the year, as long as they meet that annual requirement.

**0:22:53.0 JR:** Right.

**0:22:54.4 Tim:** That's kind of the design we have for the demonstration. And... But again, as we get more into the demonstration and certainly we're seeing more input from the PHAs on those self-inspections and the timing and the submission mechanisms, that really, what we're really just trying to do is get a good idea and a good feel of what the PHA's maintenance routine is throughout the year compared to basically just in time repaired before a REAC inspection. I hope that answers the question.

**0:23:30.9 JR:** No, that is great. Thank you very much. It does answer the question. [0:23:36.8]

\_\_\_\_\_ when there's a demo or... Out there like NSPIRE people are wondering what's gonna take place and how we can just get ready to utilize it and what other special exceptions may be made



during some kind of a crisis, I mean I say that knowing that most of us on the phone have probably not lived through a pandemic before, so certainly HUD probably has not. So this is just new ground for everyone. Thank you very much for that information. So we can continue on with, you wanna perform required annual visual inspections on pre-1978 housing that isn't confirmed to be lead-free. We understand that protocol and of course, you wanna make sure that your staff is trained in the HUD visual assessment of the CBT. I know that many agencies have to catch up on that, so if this is a great time to, at the end of this seminar, this webinar, go online and see how you can reach that. Okay, next slide please.

**0:25:00.4 JR:** You wanna communicate with the residents plan to return to annual inspections, give ample notice, communicate safety protocols that are in place, announce information in all appropriate places, so giving ample notice, understand that not all families are reluctant to have an annual inspection, not all families are reluctant to schedule and have people enter their unit however, giving ample notice provides an opportunity for those that may be hesitant to make preparations to maybe remove a person that they feel is a high risk because they understand the importance of giving his annual inspection done, so giving ample notice gives some residents an opportunity to make arrangements to allow the inspection to happen.

**0:25:52.9 JR:** You wanna communicate again, the safety protocols that are in place. Many housing authorities have, when their inspectors knock on the door, they ask the CDC questions. They ask about the persons living in the unit, and they ask about the condition of the unit. "Is there anything that we need to be aware of? Are there sick people in the unit?" And express concern in a positive way about their health and safety. Announced information in all appropriate places, so your social media PHA websites, community boards, building postings in common areas. We all know... We all have different jurisdictions, we all have different populations. We have different demographics and geography. We know what works best. We know that social media is huge, and that if the PHA has

a presence on social media and the residents are aware... It's a wonderful place to start. Your PHA website, not only does it help the residents, but also the community at large to know exactly what the Housing Authority is doing to protect not only the residents that live in public housing, but also those residents that may live next to.

**0:27:15.6 JR:** Or adjacent to a unit that is a public housing unit or in the neighborhood. So they wanna know that all of a sudden when these individuals come to do inspection, to perform inspections, that they are following a protocol. That they're not calling the city saying, "Gee, you know, the housing is gonna be sending people around and, it doesn't look like they're following their protocol." Make sure that the community understands what that protocol is. That's great information to have on a community board. Next, so example: Housing authority of the county of San Bernardino. So here's how they work their routine work order, resumptions and best practices, establish parameters for completing work orders, no guest in the unit at the time of an inspection or a work order, household remains in a different room than the technician, COVID-19 screening a time appointment is made and prior to entry. These are all protections for both the tenant and the worker. List all PPE maintenance... Should carry at all times, and make sure that happens because don't forget, your folks are now off-site for housing authorities that have scattered sites.

**0:28:36.0 JR:** You're not gonna have your eyes on your staff at all times. Make sure they understand the importance of using the PPE that is on the list. CDC videos on safely removing and disposing of PPE. Granular instruction on how to maintain safety: Put on the PPE before approaching building, the unit, re-screen households for COVID symptoms, lay tools out on tarp on the floor. These are great ideas and they're great protocols to follow and I believe that when the housing authority put this together, they thought, obviously both of the resident and the employee. When the community understands the extent of which you are willing to go to make sure that all are safe, it makes getting into the units a little bit better. Next. Here's a big one, addressing backlog

of work orders and deferred deficiencies. You have emergencies. You have non-emergencies.

Right, we all know that those two are basically, our mantras our categories that we use to determine and how we triage, our work orders. Determine the anticipated work that does not have a work order yet, known deferred maintenance routine, unit past due on annual inspection and history of care condition for those units.

**0:30:16.0 JR:** So going back to that, we're talking about units that have not had a routine maintenance inspection for some time. Understanding where those units are, knowing the history of that unit and understanding pre-COVID what issues you may have had with that unit, what issues the resident may have actually communicated to you, but you've been unable to address.

Anticipating work family size, you may anticipate extensive work where the family is now in the home all day. Whereas all day, there are maybe two adults, now there are two adults and four children. You might want to anticipate a higher use, a higher wear and tear average.

Communication campaign requests tenants call office to create work orders for issues they have deferred. This is a time where... When we talk about deferred maintenance and the inability of a maintenance person to get into a unit, sometimes residents, they self-fix, they just decide that I'm gonna do this just to keep a maintenance person from coming into the unit.

**0:31:36.4 JR:** They may sort of jury-rig something that's not working well, they may do without. They may be doing without two burners on a stove because they'd rather not have a maintenance person come in and work with it. They may have altered the unit. They may have covered up vent. They may have boarded up windows. So now they've changed the airflow in the building, in the unit, so that you may find something that you would not expect otherwise because of some self-help work that the resident has performed on the unit. Next.

**0:32:24.0 JR:** Create schedule for addressing workloads that blends with annual inspections. So

emergency issues, they always come first. But you wanna look at all of your units that have been deferred and you wanna sometimes anticipate, "Okay, I'm gonna go into this unit because X unit has an emergency situation that may have affected the other unit." So you make those kinds of anticipations, make those kinds of decisions, repairs that may result in an emergency or half ripple effect to say. There may be something going on in a unit that is affecting a unit below, you wanna adjust those quickly, can you get into...

**0:33:04.7 JR:** Can you get info on concerns that must be addressed immediately? How well are you communicating? Are people willing to call you and say, "Yes, I'm having issues here, and I need someone to come in. It is a concern. Address that." Consider offering over time to staff to expect the reduction of back log work orders. We understand the importance of keeping work orders current, clearly the influx of deferred work orders and deferred maintenance is gonna put a strain on that. So rather than create a second problem, which is creating more and more and more deferred maintenance issues and deferred work orders, incomplete work orders, schedule so that you can do more than one at a time. Consider hiring vendors to help with issues that are repetitive or where specialty skills are needed to supplement current staffing abilities, examples, door repairs and replacements, flooring repairs, sidewalk repairs etcetera. So you go into a unit and you discover that, or you go into a building and you discover that your deferred maintenance on flooring has affected the entire structure. You may not have the staff to take care of that.

**0:34:23.9 JR:** Door repairs, we do know that we have living areas... Some of us live in areas where we have hurricanes, where there may be damage that may not be addressed at the time it should be addressed, but now you have an opportunity to assess all of your doors, and it might be just too big a job, so you have to sort of hire a third party to take care of that. But this is a decision that your maintenance supervisor would have to make depending on the information you're able to gather from the residents. Another example, the Housing Authority of the sand... County of San

Bernardino site supervision catch-up plan. Each resource supervisor developed and represented a plan to the HACSB mix of overtime and employment of temporary maintenance staff established target day to complete all catch-up work, create sense of ownership and investment in the plan and caught up... And that we're able to caught up on all work within 60 days. What's really important there, I think, is that third bullet, where it says create sense of ownership and investment in the plan, that is key.

**0:35:39.9 JR:** Maintenance staff need to understand the importance... The important role they play in the agency as a whole, and not just the folks that pick up the trash or change a light bulb, but they really are the face of the agency. And they also represent many times the resolve of an agency in terms of taking care of the staff of the resident, and maintaining our safeties and in good repair property. So creating a sense of ownership really just means making sure that your maintenance people understand their role, understand how what they maintain and how they maintain it affects the agency in many, many, many ways in terms of financing, in terms of community acceptance and also in terms of your residents feeling that you as an agency, do care about their well-being.

**0:36:45.7 JR:** Establishing target days to complete or catch up work is toughie, but it can be done. You always have to take into consideration your staff availability, you always have to take into consideration emergencies and how that might wear on your ability to maintain target dates. A mixed overtime and employment of temporary maintenance staff is always a good thing if you have the staff and you have the finances, you have the money to do these things. Sometimes temporary maintenance staff, you use the temporary maintenance staff for routine items that don't require any kind of specialized training, that way that you can take your staff that you know have certain capacities and certain abilities and use them and put them where they need to be, where they can be better servicing your residents. And looking at all those items that the San Bernardino County Housing Authority, put together they were able to catch up within 60 days. Next. So resuming

inspections, Paul has your PHA resumed annual inspections? And by that, we mean getting on task and making sure that the inspections are again right in time required?

**0:38:09.7 HP:** Okay Owen, do you wanna switch the next slide from me, please. Thanks so much. So just one opportunity, we're hoping to hear from folks, we'd like for those of you... Few of you who have resumed what your plan was for getting rolling, and those of you who have not, where you're at in that process or what your thoughts are on how you're gonna get going with inspections and any backlogs that you may have, if you wanna put it in the chat or Q&A or unmute yourself, we'd love to hear from you. I know these conversations are great, we'd love to hear from real world experience of PHAs.

[pause]

**0:39:00.5 HP:** Any experience someone wants to share? Okay, next slide, please. So that wraps up the content we wanted to touch on today, here on the side just see that if you have any follow-up questions or have a TA service request, you can send that request right to the email address provided here along with these details of the follow-up on the subject line and some details within the body of the email, and we'll get back in touch with you. Thank you so much for your time today, we appreciate everyone participating and joining us.