

ICD® Clutter–Hoarding Scale® FIVE LEVELS

Structure and Zoning

Assessment of access to entrances and exits; function of plumbing, electrical, HVAC (any aspect of heating, ventilation or air conditioning) systems and appliances; and structural integrity.

Animals: Wildlife, Pets and Pests

Assessment of animal care and pet control; compliance with local animal regulations; assessment for evidence of infestations of pests (rodents, insects or other vermin).

Household Functions

Assessment of safety, functionality and accessibility of rooms for intended purposes.

Health and Safety

Assessment of sanitation levels in household; household management of any kind of medications.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recommendations for PPE (face masks, gloves, eye shields or clothing that protect wearer from environmental health and safety hazards); additional supplies as appropriate to observational level.

SCOPE OF THE SCALE

The Institute for Challenging Disorganization (ICD®) developed the Clutter–Hoarding Scale® (C–HS®) as an observational guideline tool for assessing only the residential environment. The scale focuses exclusively on environmental severity and functional impact, independent of psychiatric diagnosis. It is designed to support both non-clinical and clinical professionals in assessing safety, sanitation, and usability in residential settings.

The C–HS® assesses various types of dwellings. It focuses on the condition of the interior space and its functionality. This tool is not meant for clinical diagnosis or to evaluate an individual's behavior or tendencies. The five scale levels measure different amounts of clutter, ranging from spaces with minimal clutter (Level I - green) to spaces with extreme clutter (Level V - red).

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The full version of the Clutter–Hoarding Scale® is available on the ICD® website.

ICD® Clutter–Hoarding Scale® FIVE LEVELS

The C–HS® has five levels. Level I is the lowest on the scale, where the quantity of clutter is minimal; Level V is the highest, where the clutter is extreme. The C–HS® considers that Level III is the pivot point between a household that might be cluttered and a household assessment that may require the deeper considerations of working in a hoarded environment.

LEVEL I GREEN LOW

Household environment is considered standard with little or no clutter. Special knowledge is always required when working with individuals affected by chronic disorganization and organizing challenges.

LEVEL II BLUE GUARDED

Household environment with evidence of clutter. Specific knowledge is always required when working with individuals affected by chronic disorganization and organizing challenges.

LEVEL III YELLOW ELEVATED

ICD considers Level III to be the pivot point between a household environment that can be assessed as cluttered and a household assessment that may require the deeper considerations of working in a hoarded environment. Organizing professionals, related professionals or other individuals who are working with Level III household environments should have advanced knowledge in chronic disorganization and have developed a network of resources, especially mental health professionals.

LEVEL IV ORANGE HIGH

Household environment requires a coordinated collaborative team of service providers. Health, financial, legal, and social issues are frequently involved. Providers might include organizing professionals, health professionals, social workers, legal and financial professionals, pest and animal control officers, biohazard cleaners, licensed contractors. Advanced knowledge in hoarding behavior and coexisting conditions is required.

LEVEL V RED SEVERE

Household environment will require intervention. The individual living in Level V conditions might be involved in legal proceedings, such as a conservatorship, guardianship, divorce, custody, eviction or condemnation proceedings. Formal written agreements among the parties should be in place before proceeding. Health, financial, legal, and complex social issues are common. The team of related professionals needs to be assembled to create and implement clearly defined goals and negotiated timetables. Providers might include organizing professionals, health professionals, social workers, legal and financial professionals, pest and animal control officers, biohazard cleaners, licensed contractors, building management, zoning, fire, and/or safety agencies. The most advanced knowledge and access to resources for hoarding behavior and coexisting conditions is required.

Clutter–Hoarding Scale®

a residential observational tool
to assess the volume of clutter and environmental risks

Quick Reference Guide



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CLUTTER-HOARDING SCALE® (C-HS®)

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

	Structure and Zoning	Animals Wildlife, Pets and Pests	Household Functions	Health and Safety	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
LEVEL I	<input type="checkbox"/> All doors, stairs and windows accessible <input type="checkbox"/> All plumbing, electrical, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors installed and functional	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate animal control (behavior and sanitation) <input type="checkbox"/> Number of animals in compliance with zoning regulations <input type="checkbox"/> No evidence of non-pet rodents or insects	<input type="checkbox"/> No excessive clutter <input type="checkbox"/> All rooms are used for intended purposes <input type="checkbox"/> All household appliances fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent routine housekeeping and maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe and maintained sanitation conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Good air quality; no odors, animal or food waste, or natural propane/gas <input type="checkbox"/> Medication: appropriately stored, current dates and child-proof lids as indicated	OPTIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, flashlight and insect repellent
LEVEL II	<input type="checkbox"/> One major exit blocked <input type="checkbox"/> One major appliance or HVAC device not working for longer than one season (regionally appropriate) <input type="checkbox"/> Some plumbing or electrical systems not fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Non-existent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of inappropriate animal control (behavior and sanitation) <input type="checkbox"/> Visible or odorous pet waste <input type="checkbox"/> Visible pet fur/hair/feathers <input type="checkbox"/> Light to medium evidence of common household pests/insects	<input type="checkbox"/> Clutter obstructing some functions of key living areas <input type="checkbox"/> Slight congestion of exits, entrances, hallways and stairs <input type="checkbox"/> Some household appliances not fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent routine housekeeping and maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of non-maintained sanitation conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate air quality, odors related to dirty dishes, food preparation surfaces, laundry, toilets, sewer, or natural/propane gas. <input type="checkbox"/> Mildew in bathroom or kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Medication accessible to others and pets; presence of some expired medication	LIGHT PPE <input type="checkbox"/> Medical or industrial grade latex or nitrile gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Caps (such as baseball) or disposable bouffant caps <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable shoe covers <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, flashlight and insect repellent
LEVEL III	<input type="checkbox"/> Visible outdoor clutter, minimal garden/backyard maintenance, overflow of recycling materials, furniture, building materials, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> HVAC devices not working for longer than one season (regionally appropriate) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-existent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors <input type="checkbox"/> Sections of the home with light structural damage (having occurred in preceding six months)	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal population exceeds local legal regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of inappropriate animal control <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate sanitation (fish tank stagnant, reptile aquarium not well maintained, animal odor and waste, bird droppings) <input type="checkbox"/> Audible evidence of pests; medium level of spider webs in house <input type="checkbox"/> Light insect infestation (bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Clutter obstructing functions of key living areas <input type="checkbox"/> Clutter exists around exits, entrances, hallways and stairs <input type="checkbox"/> At least one room not being used for intended purpose, e.g., items stored in the shower, limited bed access or space <input type="checkbox"/> Several appliances not fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate usage of electric appliances and extension cords <input type="checkbox"/> Substandard housekeeping and maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> One or two obvious hazardous materials in small quantities, such as chemical spills, broken glass, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of non-maintained sanitation conditions (food preparation surfaces heavily soiled, dirty dishes, dirty toilets, visible mildew in bathroom or kitchen) <input type="checkbox"/> Unhealthy air quality, odors obvious and irritating. Possible natural/propane gas leakage <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage cans not in use, full or overflowing <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of accumulated dust, dirt and debris <input type="checkbox"/> Dirty laundry scattered throughout the house <input type="checkbox"/> Medication easily accessible to others and pets; presence of expired medication	MEDIUM PPE <input type="checkbox"/> Face masks: surgical mask or particulate respirator mask <input type="checkbox"/> Eye protection and gloves: eyeglasses, safety goggles, medical/industrial grade latex/nitrile gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable coveralls, bouffant caps, work shoes/boots <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, flashlight and insect repellent
LEVEL IV	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive outdoor clutter, random broken items, untended garden/backyard, piled recycling materials, large pieces of, building materials, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> HVAC devices not working for longer than one year <input type="checkbox"/> Non-existent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors <input type="checkbox"/> Structural damage to home existing longer than six months <input type="checkbox"/> Water damaged floors, damaged walls and foundations, broken windows, doors or plumbing <input type="checkbox"/> Odor or evidence of sewer backup	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal population exceeds local ordinances <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of poor animal sanitation; destructive behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive spiders and webs <input type="checkbox"/> Bats, squirrels, rodents in attic or basement (audible and visible) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium insect infestation (bedbugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Diminished use of and accessibility to key living areas <input type="checkbox"/> Several rooms cluttered preventing intended purposes, e.g., items stored in the shower, limited bed access or space <input type="checkbox"/> Clutter inhibits access to exits, entrances, hallways and stairs <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate storage of hazardous/combustible materials, e.g., gasoline, leaking paint or chemicals <input type="checkbox"/> Appliances used inappropriately, e.g., fridge being used for storing non-food items <input type="checkbox"/> Improper use of electric space heaters, fans or extension cords	<input type="checkbox"/> Rotting food, organic contamination <input type="checkbox"/> Expired, leaking or buckling cans and/or jars <input type="checkbox"/> Dishes and utensils unusable <input type="checkbox"/> No linens on beds; sleeping on mattress, chair or floor; infestation of bedding and/or furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Very unhealthy air quality. Obvious mold/mildew; visible moisture or standing water <input type="checkbox"/> Medication inappropriately stored and scattered in different places, easily accessible to others and pets; presence of expired medication	FULL PPE <input type="checkbox"/> Face masks: particulate respirator mask, or respirator with organic filter(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Safety goggles; medical/industrial grade latex/nitrile gloves; heavy duty work gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable coveralls, caps, and shoe covers; work shoes/boots <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, headlamp/flashlight and insect repellent
LEVEL V	<input type="checkbox"/> Extreme indoor/outdoor clutter; foliage overgrowth; abandoned machinery; large quantity of recycling materials, large pieces of furniture, building materials, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate or non-existent ventilation; HVAC systems not working <input type="checkbox"/> Non-existent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors <input type="checkbox"/> Water damaged floors, walls and foundation; broken windows, doors or plumbing <input type="checkbox"/> Unreliable electrical, no running water, broken sewer/septic systems; sewer backup <input type="checkbox"/> Irreparable damage to exterior and interior structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals at risk and dangerous to people due to behavior, health and numbers <input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive spiders, mice, rats, squirrels, raccoons, bats, snakes, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy insect infestation (bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Key living spaces not usable <input type="checkbox"/> All rooms not used for intended purposes <input type="checkbox"/> Exits, entrances, hallways and stairs blocked <input type="checkbox"/> Toilets, sinks and tubs not functioning <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous conditions obscured by clutter <input type="checkbox"/> Appliances unusable <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous and primitive use of kerosene, lanterns, candles, fireplace/woodstove as primary source of heat and/or light	<input type="checkbox"/> Human urine and excrement present <input type="checkbox"/> Rotting food; organic contamination; expired, leaking or buckled cans and/or jars <input type="checkbox"/> Dishes and utensils buried or non-existent <input type="checkbox"/> Beds inaccessible or unusable due to clutter or infestation <input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive mold/mildew; moisture or standing water <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous air quality, intolerable odors <input type="checkbox"/> Medication: current and expired medication commingled; haphazard storage; pills not in containers	FULL PPE REQUIRED <input type="checkbox"/> Face masks: particulate respirator mask or respirator with organic filter(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Safety goggles; medical/industrial grade latex/nitrile gloves; heavy duty work gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable coveralls, caps and shoe covers; work shoes/boots <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, headlamp/flashlight and insect repellent