

Partial Listing of VA Minimum Property Requirements (MPRs)

MPRs are the minimum standards that the home needs to meet for VA to accept the loan. If the home does not meet MPRs, it will need to be repaired to these standards, or the loan will not be approved.

The overall goal of MPRs is to ensure the home is safe, sanitary, and structurally sound. Also, that it meets local standards for a permanent home. If it's a new construction home, it must meet the local building code as well as HUD requirements.

The home must meet VA's minimum property requirements, or MPRs, to be eligible for VA financing.

There are a couple basic requirements that you probably won't have any problem with, as you will most likely weed out such properties that don't have adequate spaces for

- Living
- Sleeping
- Cooking and dining
- Sanitary facilities

Or without safe, reliable mechanical systems that appear to be in working order and will continue to function after you purchase the home.

Heating and Electricity

Homes with a wood burning stove also need to have a backup heating system that can sustain the home temperature at 50 degrees. Why 50 degrees? Because it's well above the point at which water pipes can freeze, burst, and flood the home. Solar systems that heat water or living space must be backed up with conventional methods. The VA requires the home to have electricity in all areas of the home for lighting and equipment.

Water

The home must have its own water heater as well as safe, potable (drinkable) water. The home must also have a working septic system. Whether it's a public or private system, meaning city sewer or septic tank, it has to work properly.

Homes with a well instead of a community or public water system may require a water quality analysis to ensure that the water is safe to drink. No matter which kind of financing you choose, it's a good idea to obtain a water analysis on an individual well prior to buying the home.

Homes on a community well will be required to prove that the community system is of adequate size for the amount of homes served, and that water will be delivered at a reasonable cost going forward.

Roof and Crawl Space

The roof must not leak, which is common sense. However, the VA also requires the roof to have viable life left. If there is doubt about the roof, expect the VA underwriter to require a roof inspection, which is different than a home inspection or appraisal. It's a dedicated roof report that states that the roof has a certain number of years of life left. If there's not enough life left, the roof will need to be replaced.

The crawl space, or "crawl," is the space underneath the floor. The crawl must be accessible, clear of debris, and properly vented. An unvented crawl causes the wood underneath the house to rot. If left unchecked, rotting support beams underneath the home can cause structural damage. Likewise, the attic must be adequately vented.

Access to the Home

The VA requires the home to have an adequate access either by foot or car from a public or private street. The access has to be a viable one year-round. For multi-unit homes, each unit must be accessible without trespassing through another unit or another's property.

Defects and Deterioration

The property must be free of defective construction or decay. The VA appraiser will search the property for such items, along with evidence of any wood-destroying insects. Termites and the like can cause expensive and dangerous damage to the foundation of a home.

Other Safety Hazards or Conditions

Typical safety items include missing handrails on stairs having more than two steps, lack of deck rails or fall protection along retaining walls or other such structures. Typical sanitary problems include defective septic systems, plumbing leaks, water or dampness in crawlspaces or basements. Other conditions that in the judgement of the appraiser may affect the safety of the occupants or the durability of the structure.

Lead-based Paint

Lead-based paint is another big issue for VA loans. If you are looking at homes built prior to 1978, there's a good chance the appraiser will request paint repairs. This is because the appraiser must assume that a house of this age has lead-based paint. Any paint defects like chipping or peeling must be repaired, as this is a lead poisoning hazard.

However, there's a chance that the surface itself is deteriorated. In this case the siding or interior wallboard will need to be replaced, along with the paint.

Location of the Home

One aspect of a home that a veteran may not think about prior to making an offer is regarding the geographical location and the surrounding characteristics. If the home itself is located on a gas or petroleum pipeline easement, it may not be eligible for VA financing. The easement is the area surrounding the pipeline, a buffer for utility crews to access and work on the pipeline.

If the home structure is located within 220 yards on either side of the pipeline (the pipeline itself, not the easement), a letter will need to be written by the pipeline company stating that the pipeline is compliant with certain codes.

Likewise, there are restrictions against the home being too close to high voltage electric lines. The structure or outbuildings may not be within the electric line easement (buffer area). This rule doesn't refer to standard street power lines, but large, high voltage transmission lines.

Manufactured Homes

Manufactured homes must meet the standard MPRs of standard homes, with a few additional requirements. The home must be permanently affixed to a foundation that is adequate for the load of the home. In addition, manufactured homes in certain geographical locations may require special ties and bindings to resist hurricanes and earthquakes.

Most manufactured homes will require a permanent skirting, which is a continuous metal or wood enclosure around the foundation. In addition, most manufactured homes need a vapor barrier.

Who Pays for Repairs?

If repairs are needed, such as paint repair, roof repair, etc., the VA does not specify who is responsible for paying for the repairs, only that they be made as a condition of the VA guaranteeing the loan.

Is the VA Appraisal a Substitute for a Home Inspection?

Even though VA appraisal involves the appraiser to make a thorough viewing of the property being appraised, the viewing (inspection) is generally limited to those areas which are "readily observable" and not to the same standard of viewing that would likely be made for a "whole house" inspection by a professional home inspector. It does not replace a home inspection. A home inspector will check aspects of the home that are outside of the VA appraiser's purview.

Why Enforce Minimum Property Requirements?

All these requirements may seem to be extra burden on veterans trying to obtain VA financing. However, it's quite the contrary. The VA does not wish veterans to be strapped to a home that is not livable or will be too costly to maintain or repair.