

Hoarding: Levels 1-5

Professional organizers use this scale to assess the degree of a potential client's hoarding. According to Behavioral Health Central, more than 3 million Americans suffer from hoarding disorder. For a true hoarder, it takes consistent work with a mental health professional, assistance from cleaning, organizing and removal services, and most importantly, a strong motivation to change to create and maintain a safe and orderly home. At Type A Home we have worked successfully with Levels 1–4.

LEVEL ONE

A level 1 household is clean and livable with some clutter, and perhaps occasional pet odors. Clutter is not excessive. Home exhibits good housekeeping and safe and healthy sanitation. Some pest evidence — a few mouse droppings or an ants invasion — might be found in a Level 1 house. All doors and stairways of the home are accessible.

LEVEL TWO

In a level 2 house, clutter inhabits two or more rooms. One major appliance, hasn't worked for at least six months. Limited evidence of housekeeping, light unpleasant odors, overflowing garbage cans, light to medium mildew in kitchens and bathrooms, and moderately soiled food preparation surfaces. Some pet odor, pet waste puddles, light pet dander, three or more incidents of feces in litter boxes. Limited fish, bird or reptile care and light to medium evidence of common household rodents/insects.

LEVEL THREE

Levels 3 continues in this mode but with floor to ceiling clutter, including visible clutter outdoors. Two or more appliances are broken. Stagnant fish tanks, neglected reptile aquarium and/or bird droppings not cleaned. Audible rodent evidence, light flea infestation and some spider webs. Indoor clutter leads to narrow hall and stair pathways, one bedroom or bathroom isn't fully usable. Excessive dust, dirty bed linens and no recent vacuuming or sweeping. Heavily soiled food preparation areas and full, odorous garbage cans. Unpleasant odors throughout the house.

LEVEL FOUR

Structural damage such as leaks or broken windows, unusable bathrooms, rotting food and significant pest infestations. Mold and mildew. Bedroom is unusable, hazardous materials are stored in the home, and flammable, packed materials are in the living area or attached garage. Rotting food on counters, one to 15 cans of aged canned goods with buckled surfaces, no clean dishes or utensils in kitchen. No

bed covers.

LEVEL FIVE

Obvious structural damage, broken walls, disconnected electrical service, no water service, no working sewer or septic system. Standing water indoors, fire hazards and hazardous materials exceed local ordinances. Pets are dangerous to occupant and guests. Rodents in sight, mosquito or other insect infestation and regional critters, such as squirrels, inside the home. Kitchen and bathroom unusable due to clutter. Occupant is living or sleeping outside the home. Human feces, rotting food and more than 15 aged canned goods with buckled surfaces inside the home. A person with a level 5 hoarding problem can sometimes not live in his own home because there is nowhere to sleep and the bathroom and kitchen are unusable.

Sources: The National Study Group on Compulsive Disorganization and The National Study Group of Chronic Disorganization. For additional information see,

http://www.nsgcd.org/resources/clutterhoardingscale/nsgcd_clutterhoardingscale.pdf