

2026 HVAC GFCI Compliance Brief

Selecting HF GFCIs and Class C SPGFCIs Before the September 1, 2026 NEC 210.8(F) Deadline

Who this brief is for

North American distributors, electrical contractors, OEM sourcing teams, and project specifiers preparing residential outdoor HVAC work for the 2026 NEC code cycle. The brief consolidates the device-class decision, the September 1, 2026 deadline mechanics, and the verification steps that should sit on every PO before the rule begins affecting active jobs.

What's inside

- Page 2** The 3-class decision matrix — Class A GFCI vs. Class A HF GFCI vs. Class C SPGFCI, with the NEC code path each one covers.
- Page 3** Pre-purchase verification checklist — 8 items that catch the most common substitution errors before a PO goes out.
- Page 4** RFQ and submittal language templates — copy-paste blocks for spec sheets, plus the exact disconnect warning label required under Exception 3.

Why this brief exists. Section 210.8(F) Exception 2 expires on September 1, 2026. After that date, listed outdoor HVAC equipment at dwellings must be protected by a GFCI or SPGFCI in jurisdictions on the 2026 NEC cycle. The HVAC industry now has two purpose-built device options to handle the inverter-driven nuisance tripping problem that drove the rule change in the first place. Choosing between them is a sourcing decision, not just an inspection one.

Standards and code references used in this brief

NFPA 70 (2026 NEC), Section 210.8(F) and Exceptions 2 and 3 • UL 943, Supplement SB (HF rating, August 2025) • UL 943C, Outline of Investigation for Special-Purpose GFCIs • UL 101, applicable equipment leakage standard

Three Devices, Three Code Paths

Most online summaries treat "HF GFCI" and "Class C SPGFCI" as the same product. They are not. HF and HF+ are markings that can appear on two different device classes, and the two classes serve different NEC paths under 210.8(F).

Device	Trip Threshold	Listed Under	NEC 210.8(F) Path
Class A GFCI (standard)	4–6 mA at 60 Hz	UL 943	General compliance — covers the main 210.8(F) requirement for outlets not feeding listed HVAC equipment.
Class A GFCI with HF mark	4–6 mA at 60 Hz, evaluated against high-frequency leakage	UL 943, Supplement SB (Aug 2025)	General 210.8(F) path — best fit when the circuit feeds inverter-driven or VFD loads where nuisance tripping is the concern.
Class C SPGFCI (HF or HF+)	Frequency-weighted, up to ~20 mA	UL 943C	Exception 3 only. Listed HVAC equipment, with the disconnect label required.

Selection rule for 2026 residential outdoor work

If the circuit does not feed listed HVAC equipment — use a Class A GFCI. If the circuit feeds inverter or variable-speed loads where nuisance tripping is a concern, an HF-marked Class A device is usually the better choice. Personnel protection is unchanged at 4–6 mA.

If the circuit feeds listed outdoor HVAC equipment after September 1, 2026 — either a Class A GFCI (HF-marked or not) covers the main rule, or a Class C SPGFCI can be used under Exception 3. The SPGFCI path is the one that allows the frequency-weighted, higher trip threshold designed for HVAC loads — but it carries the disconnect labeling requirement on page 3 of this brief.

Class C is not a drop-in substitute for Class A. Substituting one class for the other on a project where the engineer specified a particular path can fail inspection, void the equipment manufacturer's listing assumptions, or both. Always confirm the specified class on the drawings before approving a substitute.

Pre-Purchase Verification Checklist

Run through these eight items before issuing a PO or approving a substitution for any 2026 residential outdoor HVAC-related work. Each one maps to a real field issue distributors and contractors have run into during early adoption.

■ **NEC cycle adopted by the jurisdiction**

- 01 Confirm whether the project's AHJ has adopted the 2026 NEC. Projects permitted under 2020 or 2023 cycles are not bound by Exception 3 or the September 1, 2026 deadline.

■ **Specified protection class on the drawings**

- 02 Identify whether the engineer specified a Class A GFCI, a Class A HF GFCI, or a Class C SPGFCI. These three are not interchangeable. Substitution requires engineer approval.

■ **HVAC equipment listing status**

- 03 Exception 3 applies only to listed HVAC equipment. If the equipment is not listed, the Class C SPGFCI path is not available — fall back to Class A protection.

■ **Disconnect labeling for Class C installs**

- 04 If using Class C SPGFCI under Exception 3, confirm the HVAC disconnect carries the required warning label (exact wording on page 4). Missing label = failed inspection.

■ **Outdoor receptacle markings — WR and TR**

- 05 For receptacle-supplied outdoor work, verify the device carries the WR (weather-resistant) and TR (tamper-resistant) markings required under NEC 406 for the location.

■ **UL 943 / UL 943C listing documentation**

- 06 Request the device listing documentation from the supplier. "HF-ready" or "HVAC-compatible" in marketing copy is not the same as a listed Supplement SB or UL 943C evaluation.

■ **Manufacturer's installation instructions**

- 07 Read the HVAC unit's nameplate and installation manual. Some manufacturers explicitly call out the GFCI class their listing was developed against.

■ **Cross-border / Canadian acceptance**

- 08 For Canadian or dual-market projects, verify the cUL or CSA mark and the relevant provincial code separately. A U.S. HF listing does not automatically transfer to a Canadian installation.

RFQ & Submittal Language

Copy-paste blocks for purchase orders, submittal sheets, and the disconnect label required under NEC 210.8(F) Exception 3.

Sample RFQ language for distributors

For Class A HF GFCI receptacles:

"Quote [QTY] units of [model] 15A/20A 125V duplex GFCI receptacles, Class A, listed to UL 943 with the HF marking under Supplement SB. Devices to be UL/cUL listed, weather-resistant (WR) and tamper-resistant (TR), self-test type. Provide listing documentation and submittal sheet with quote."

For Class C SPGFCI (HVAC applications):

"Quote [QTY] units of [model] Class C SPGFCI listed to UL 943C, suitable for use with listed HVAC equipment under NEC 210.8(F) Exception 3. Provide listing documentation, frequency-weighted trip threshold rating, and the disconnect warning label artwork or text reference."

Required disconnect label (Exception 3)

If a Class C SPGFCI is used to protect listed HVAC equipment under 210.8(F) Exception 3, the disconnect serving that HVAC unit must carry the following label:

"WARNING: Class C SPGFCI Protection Provided for HVAC Unit."

Need samples or a project quote?

We manufacture UL/cUL certified GFCI receptacles, USB outlets, switches, and wall plates for the North American market. Samples, certification documentation, and submittal sheets available on request.

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This brief is an educational summary intended to support sourcing and specification decisions. It is not a substitute for the full text of NFPA 70, the relevant UL standards, or guidance from the local AHJ. Always verify code adoption status and product listing details before specifying or installing.