



Smoke Alarms in Rentals

A Factsheet on Requirements for Rental Properties

Roughly 70 percent of home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are the great safety success story of the 20th century — but only when they're working properly.

Do You Rent & Need a Smoke Alarm?

Whether you live in a rented house or apartment, your landlord is required to provide you with a working smoke alarm.

Responsibilities of Landlords

- Install working smoke alarms as required by code and following the manufacturers instructions.
- Buildings constructed prior to 1980 may have battery powered alarms installed. Smoke alarms installed in buildings constructed since 1980 should receive their primary power source from building wiring.
- All smoke alarms should carry the approval of Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) Testing Laboratories.
- Inspect and test alarms when a unit becomes vacant. Smoke alarms should be repaired or replaced before the rental unit is reoccupied.
- Instruct tenants on the purpose, operation and maintenance of the devices. Provide written notice to tenants describing

their responsibility to maintain smoke alarms.

Responsibilities of Tenants

- Maintain smoke alarms in good working order. This involves testing the detector monthly according to the manufacturer's instructions, as well as regularly cleaning the alarm with a vacuum.
- If the smoke alarm is battery operated, the tenant is responsible for replacing the battery once each year using the battery type listed on the alarm.
- Caution: If you live in an apartment building with wired-in smoke alarms, check with your landlord for correct testing and maintenance procedures.

Inform your landlord of this legal requirement by showing him/her this information. Ask your landlord to supply you with the necessary smoke alarms as soon as possible. If you live in the City of Seattle, contact Department of Planning & Development (www.seattle.gov/dpd) if an approved and operable smoke alarm is not provided upon request.

If you need assistance working with your landlord, contact one of

the local mediation offices for tenant-landlord disputes.

- The Dispute Resolution Center
(206) 443-9603
- The Tenant's Union
(206) 723-0500
1-800-752-9993

You can also call the Washington State Attorney General's Office Consumer Line at 1-800-692-5086. You can either talk to an operator or listen to recorded messages.

For More Information

Contact:
Seattle Fire Department
fireinfo@seattle.gov
www.seattle.gov/fire

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Carbon Monoxide Alarm Requirements in Residential Occupancies

Updated October 2014

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that cannot be seen or smelled. It can cause illness and death in some situations, particularly within enclosed indoor areas. Carbon monoxide is produced by fuel-burning appliances, fireplaces and vehicles. The most common causes of CO poisoning are the indoor use of charcoal or gas grills, as well as the running of generators in garages or near air intakes.

Following a 2006 windstorm, 250 people were treated for carbon monoxide poisoning in the Puget Sound area and eight died, all from either burning charcoal briquettes inside their homes or from improper use of gasoline-powered generators.

In response to these tragedies, new state-wide law and building codes require CO alarms in residential buildings, including single-family homes.

Code Requirements

All Residential Rental Housing

State law and the Seattle Fire Code require all residential rental units to have CO alarms installed retroactively, including rental homes, apartments, and condominiums. The only exception to this requirement is Residential Group R-2 buildings (this includes apartments and condominiums) when those occupancies do not contain a fuel-burning appliance, fuel-burning fireplace, or an attached garage.

Owner-Occupied Single-Family Homes

New single-family type homes must include CO alarms. Existing owner-occupied homes legally occupied before July 26, 2009 are exempt, but they are still required to include CO alarms in any building permit application for interior remodeling. When the house is

sold, state law also requires that CO alarms be installed before the new owner takes occupancy.

Hotels, Dorms and Institutions

Sleeping rooms in hotels, motels, dormitories, DSHS-licensed boarding homes and residential treatment facilities do not require CO alarms if the sleeping rooms are properly isolated from any fireplace, fuel-burning appliance or attached garage, and if there is a CO alarm detection system in the building's common areas.

Installation

CO alarms should be installed in the area outside of each bedroom, with at least one alarm for each floor of the dwelling. Follow manufacturer's guidelines on proper installation. They may be purchased at local hardware and home improvement stores. Models are available that run entirely on batteries or that plug in with battery backup. Combination smoke alarm/CO alarm units are also available. All units should be UL-2034 compliant.

Further Information

These new code provisions were developed with input from medical professionals, building operators, engineers and other experts to effectively prevent carbon monoxide poisonings while minimizing cost and disruption to owners and tenants. As all homes and apartments become equipped with CO alarms, the frequency of CO poisonings in our community should decrease dramatically.

More information is available on the State Building Code Council web site at: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ga/apps/sbcc/Page.aspx?nid=168>. Read the full text of the state law at: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=19.27.530>.

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www.seattle.gov/fire

