



FIRE SAFETY IN MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS



Multi-family dwellings pose a significant life-safety risk, due to the number of occupants living under one roof, and fires in multi-family dwellings can have catastrophic results. Care must be taken and attention must be given to these safety issues in order to prevent devastating life-altering results and to maintain a fire-safe environment for all tenants.

It is very important that owners and property managers of multi-family dwellings understand the fire protection systems within their buildings. This includes knowing what fire protection systems you have (such as sprinkler systems, fire alarms, or simply fire extinguishers and smoke detectors) and understanding their purpose and how they function. It is also imperative that these systems be maintained in working condition at all times. These systems are designed to watch for fire, defend against fire, alert residents to a possible fire, and provide them with the precious time needed to make a successful escape. In addition to fire protection systems, it is important to be familiar with common hazards that can cause fires to start and keep people from getting out safely. Some of the common hazards associated with multi-family dwellings are:

- Outdated or missing fire extinguishers
- Missing or outdated smoke detectors
- Missing or damaged self-closing devices on fire doors and exit doors
- Storage in hallways restricting egress
- Lighting in common areas missing bulbs
- Allowing tenants to store or use grills on or under balconies, or closer than 10' from building
- Holes in common area walls
- Hallway fire doors propped open
- Accumulation of dust and lint in laundry rooms
- Storage of hazardous or flammable items
- Combustibles stored next to water heaters, furnaces, or under stairs
- Fire protection equipment not serviced or have painted sprinkler heads

As a result, the Frankfort's Fire & EMS Department is working extra hard to spread the "Fire is Everyone's Fight" message to all multi-family developments (3 or more units with common areas) in the city by notifying all property owners of multi-family dwellings of our annual Multi-family Fire Prevention and Life Safety Inspection Program. The Frankfort's Fire & EMS Department is dedicated to working with owners and property managers of multi-family dwellings in order to reduce fire and life safety issues within their properties. This also keeps owners compliant with their property insurance policies.

While the above list is not every element inspected, it does list the most common codes that you should be familiar with. A self-inspection checklist is provided for your use as a guide to help maintain a code-compliant and fire-safe environment.



Self-Inspection Checklist for Multi-Family Buildings (3 or more units)

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND SMOKE DETECTORS: Is there a portable fire extinguisher in your Common area? Existing fire extinguishers are required to be mounted in a visible and readily accessible location. Extinguishers are required to be serviced and inspected annually by a licensed fire extinguisher service company and hold a current service tag. Contact any local fire extinguish service company for service. Is your smoke detector(s) older than 10 years and are you conducting monthly tests? Records are to be kept indicating monthly tests of smoke detectors in common areas and those older than 10 years, are required to be replaced.

EXTERIOR: Are address numbers for the building clearly visible from the street or driveway? Numbers should be at least 3 inches high and contrast with their background. Larger numbers are allowed. Are the areas outside the fire exit doors clear? If a fire occurs, tenants and patrons need to have a safe passage both to the exit as well as outside the exit to reach a safe distance away from the building. Is the trash dumpster more than 10 feet from the building's exterior wall or roof overhang? If the dumpster is within 10 feet and were to catch on fire, it would likely spread to the building (such as what recently happened at our Cattleman's Roadhouse restaurant).

ELECTRICAL (Common areas): Are the electrical appliances and the cords supplying power to them in good working condition? Frayed power cords and worn or poorly maintained electrical equipment will start a fire. Do not use extension cords or "power strips" for supplying power to large appliances such as refrigerators, copy machines, or microwave ovens. Is there a clear area in front of all electrical panels? A clear path and clearance of 36 inches in front of the panel is required. Is there a cover on all electrical switches, outlets and junction boxes? Missing covers are a common safety hazard. Are all circuit breakers within the panel identified with no missing blank covers? Missing covers is a fire and life safety hazard.

EXITING and FIRE DOORS: If the power goes out, can you, your employees and customers see well enough to get out of the building safely? Lighting fixtures must provide illumination – ensure bulbs are functioning and not missing from the fixture. We encourage you to have a working flashlight handy also. If emergency lighting exists, it must be operational. Is there a clear aisle or passageway (36" wide) to all exit doors? Building occupants must be able to get to the exit doors, within the common areas, without having to go around storage or personal items that are in the way. Can you see these exit doors or signs indicating their location within your common areas? Buildings with multiple exits must identify the exit doors with signs having letters 6 inches high. If the existing exit sign is also designed to be illuminated, it must be functional. Are the self-closing devices on fire doors functional and not propped open? Fire doors are to have self-closing devices and are not to be propped open for convenience, because open fire doors will not stop the spread of fire or smoke when left open. Damaged or partial removed self-closing devices on fire doors must be replaced or repaired.

ALARM/SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS: Does your apartment building have an alarm, sprinkler, and/or hood and duct system? These systems must be maintained and tested at least annually by licensed technicians. All testing results are required to be forwarded to the City's Fire Marshal.

MISCELLANEOUS Are there any holes or openings in your common area walls or ceilings? Sheet rock and ceiling tiles create a fire barrier. These must remain intact or repaired to be effective. Does your apartment have a Knox Box (a key security box) or desire to have one? Ensure the keys and emergency contacts are current. If you desire to have a security box for emergency personnel access, please contact the City's Fire Marshal. Does your apartment complex have private fire hydrants? It is your responsibility to have them inspected and maintained annually by a licensed utility contractor and to provide copies of test and inspection reports to the Fire Marshal. Do your tenants have grills (propane or charcoal) on balconies? Grills are not allowed on balconies or under balconies and should be 10 feet from the building.

Please also visit our Twitter and Facebook sites for regular fire prevention and life safety tips:

<https://twitter.com/FrankfortKYFire>

<https://www.facebook.com/frankfortfireandems/>