


 581 Washington, 2009  
 HOUSING

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#### Safe, Healthy Housing Checklist

Call

338-3287 for building code violations or  
332-8172 for fire code violations.

This is a general safety checklist for houses or apartments. The list is not all-inclusive but is based on a current edition of the Washington State Building Code. The building code requires a building to comply with the codes in effect at the time it was built. The actual rules for the building you live in may be different than this list; that is if your building was built in the 1960s the building should comply with the codes in effect at that time which may not be the same as the codes for building today. In particular, bedrooms in all housing built after 1969 and all bedrooms in older buildings that were created after 1969 are required to have egress windows complying with the building code in effect at that time. However, WAC 212-10 does require that all rental units be protected by a properly installed and maintained smoke detector, regardless of when it was built; the occupant is responsible for maintenance of the smoke detector. If you believe there is an unsafe condition in your house or apartment contact the building owner, their agent, the city building inspector or the city fire inspector.

- The bedroom(s), living room and dining room in an apartment should have openings to the outside to provide fresh air. This could be a door, window or a mechanical ventilation system.
- The electrical boxes should have a cover over the wires.  
When you use an electrical outlet or switch it should not spark or shock you.
- The pipes used to vent the products of combustion (smoke) from the furnace or water heater should have tight joints.
- Fuel burning furnaces or water heaters need oxygen for combustion to take place. An excellent source of oxygen is the air in a building. The room housing these appliances should be large enough to supply the needed air, have openings into a large room, have openings to the outside of the building, or have air piped directly into the appliance.
- Fuel burning furnaces or water heaters should not be located in bedrooms or bathrooms.
- Fuel burning furnaces or water heaters should not be accessed from bedrooms or bathrooms.
- Furnaces, wall heaters, room heaters, woodstoves, gas stoves and water heaters are required to have a clear space from walls or ceilings. The required clear space is often on a label on the side of the appliance. If there is not a label, you may check with the building inspector or fire inspector for the required clearance.
- All apartments are required to have a door opening into a hallway or the outside.  
Generally a dwelling or apartment is only required to have one exit.
- The support walls and posts should be plumb and straight.
- The beams supporting the floors or roofs should be level and straight.
- Bedrooms should have a window or door for occupants to escape or be rescued if the need arises.
- Each house or apartment should have a kitchen with a sink.
- Each house or apartment should have a separate bathroom containing a toilet, lavatory, tub or shower.
- The sink, lavatory and tub or shower should have hot water.
- The roof and walls should not leak water.
- An address number or letter should be on each unit.
- Each house or apartment should have a heating system.
- The area outside of each bedroom should have a smoke detector.

#### Smoke Detectors

- Smoke detectors are powered either by battery, household electrical wiring, or wiring with battery backup.
- Smoke detectors in dwelling units built after December 31, 1980, receive the primary power source from the household electrical wiring.
- Each sleeping area has at least one smoke detector.
- Sleeping areas that are separate should have at least one smoke detector per area.
- The smoke detector battery is operational and the smoke detector is clean.