



Life Safety Division • City of Duluth Fire Department

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Residential Pre-Inspection Checklist

This checklist is intended for owners and/or managers of rental property, including single-family, two-family, and multi-dwelling units. THESE ARE NOT ALL OF THE STATE AND LOCAL REQUIREMENTS, BUT RATHER THE MOST COMMONLY FOUND VIOLATIONS. Ordinance requires all units in a rental building be inspected, including owner occupied units.

EXTERIOR

Address Numbers. Must be clearly readable from the street (or alleyway if applicable), both at day and night. Numbers must be a minimum of 4" high and in a contrasting color.

Roof. Must be tight, without leaks and have no missing or severely deteriorated shingles.

Exterior Surfaces. Exterior surfaces, including but not limited to, doors, door and window frames, cornices, porches, trim, balconies, decks and fences, shall be maintained in good condition. Exterior wood surfaces, other than decay-resistant woods, shall be protected from the elements and decay by painting or other protective covering or treatment. Peeling, flaking and chipped paint shall be eliminated and surfaces repainted. Siding and masonry joints, as well as those between the building envelope and the perimeter of windows, doors and skylights, shall be maintained weather resistant and watertight. Metal surfaces subject to rust or corrosion shall be coated to inhibit such rust and corrosion, and surfaces with rust or corrosion shall be stabilized and coated to inhibit future rust and corrosion. Oxidation stains shall be removed from exterior surfaces.

Stairs/Porches/Decks. Must be maintained in sound condition and good repair. New or substantial replacement must comply with requirements as defined in the State Building Code. Contact Construction Services Department @ 218-730-5240.

Rails. Handrails are required on stairs having more than four risers and must be maintained in good condition. They are to be positioned between 34" to 38" above the stair nosing, and ends must return to a wall or a post. Graspable surface shall have a cross between 1 ¼" to 2 ¼".

Guards. Existing guardrails must be a minimum of 30" in height, be legally installed in accordance with applicable building code and be maintained in good repair. New guardrails in porches, balconies or raised floor areas that are more than 30" above the floor or grade below, shall be not less than 36" in height. Open sides of stairs with a total rise of more than 30" above the floor or grade shall have guardrails not less than 34" in height measured vertically from the tread nosing. Required guardrails shall have intermediate rails or ornamental closures that do not allow a 4" diameter sphere to pass through. The triangular openings formed by the riser, tread and bottom rail of a guardrail shall not permit a 6" sphere to pass through.

Doors. Must be in sound condition and good repair. Required entry doors must be equipped with deadbolt lockset, with a 1" throw, and capable of being easily opened from the inside without the use of a key.

Windows. Must be in sound condition, have no broken glass, have hardware to hold in the "open" position and fit tight within the frame. Locks are required on every window within 6 feet of grade, including second story and if accessible by fire escape, stairs, etc. Windows can be equipped with bars for security if they are not required "egress windows." Windows must be equipped with full screens May 15-October 15th.

Egress Windows. One window from each sleeping room must be easily openable from the inside. Security grates and bars must have mechanisms that open easily from inside.

Recommendation. It is suggested that at least one window in each sleeping room, having the following specification, be installed: 4.5 sq. ft. of clear openable area, minimum clear opening width of 20", minimum clear opening height of 20" & maximum sill height above the floor of 44". In many cases a casement style window with egress hardware provides the maximum openable area in an existing rough opening. If the existing rough opening is altered an egress window meeting current building code requirements must be installed.

Garbage Containers. Owners are required to provide sufficient containers with lids and regular garbage pick-up. Tenants are required to dispose of rubbish or garbage in the provided containers. Containers should be removed to private property area promptly after pickup.

INTERIOR

Walls/Floors/Ceiling/Paint. Interior surfaces, including windows and doors, shall be maintained in good, clean and sanitary condition. Peeling, chipping, flaking or abraded paint shall be repaired, removed or covered. Cracked or loose plaster/drywall, decayed wood and other defective surface conditions shall be corrected.

Ceiling Height.

Basement Rooms. Basement rooms with ceiling heights of less than 6'4" are not permissible. Protrusions, such as pipes, may not be below 6'4" in a habitable space or access to habitable spaces.

Attic Rooms. Habitable rooms/spaces (i.e. attic bedrooms) in existing attics are allowed and can be constructed as legal non-conforming rooms provided the space has a minimum finished ceiling height of 6 feet 8 inches as defined below:

Alterations to existing attic spaces or proposed rental properties are required to meet the following:

- Finished ceiling height of 6 feet 8 inches with a clear height of 6 feet 4 inches under beams, girders, ducts or other obstructions
- Attic stairway requirements: Headroom: 6 feet 4 inches minimum. Stair Rise: 8 inches maximum, Stair Run: 9 inches minimum
- Window opening area of 5.7 square feet per MN Residential Code R310 for alterations to existing attic spaces
- Window opening area of 4.5 square feet for new proposed rental properties (Existing finished attic spaces)
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms per MN Residential Code R314 & R315
- Light, ventilation, and heating per MN Residential Code R303
- Building permits are required for alterations to attic spaces, including existing bedrooms in attic spaces not documented per City or County Assessor records Ceiling heights for work in existing spaces must be verified by inspection prior to permit approval. Definitions: Ceiling Height: The clear vertical distance from the finished floor to the finished ceiling. Habitable Space: A space in a building for living, sleeping, eating, or cooking.

Stairs/Rails. Same specifications as exterior stairs except construction materials need not be of exterior grade.

Extermination. All structures shall be kept free from insect and rodent infestation.

Owner. The owner of any structure shall be responsible for extermination within the structure prior to renting or leasing the structure.

Single occupant. The occupant of a one-family dwelling or of a single-tenant nonresidential structure shall be responsible for extermination on the premises.

Multiple Occupancy. The owner of a structure containing two or more dwelling units, a multiple occupancy, rooming house or a nonresidential structure shall be responsible for extermination in the public or shared areas of the structure and exterior property. If infestation is caused by failure of an occupant to prevent such infestation in the area occupied, the occupant shall be responsible for extermination.

Occupant. The occupant of any structure shall be responsible for the continued rodent and pest-free condition of the structure.

Exception. Where the infestations are caused by defects in the structure, the owner shall be responsible for extermination.

Occupancy Separation. Fire walls and doors are required between commercial/residential space or attached or tucked under garage/residential space as defined in the State Building Code.

BASEMENT/UTILITIES/CONDEMNATION

Combustible Storage / Furnace Room. No combustible storage in any room containing furnace, heating, mechanical, or electrical equipment.

Furnace/Heating Plant. Must be capable of providing heat at 68° Fahrenheit in all habitable rooms, bathrooms, and toilet rooms during the period from October 1 to May 15. Required temperatures shall be measured 3 feet above the floor near the mid-point of the exterior wall and 2 feet inward from the center of each exterior wall. Installation or alteration of heating equipment must be done by a qualified contractor or service company upon obtaining a heating permit from the Building Safety Department. A separate plumbing permit may be required for gas piping.

Plumbing/Sewer. Kitchen sinks, hand sinks, bathtubs, showers, toilets or urinals must be supplied with running water, adequate hot water where applicable, and must be connected to the sewer and water system in accordance with all provisions of the Minnesota State Plumbing Code. Plumbing fixtures must supply reasonable pressure and be free from leaks.

Water Heater. Must be capable of supplying adequate hot water at a minimum temperature of 110° Fahrenheit at every kitchen sink, tub, shower, and laundry facility. All repairs or alterations must be made under permit from the Building Safety Department by a licensed contractor in accordance with the Plumbing Code.

Gas Connections. Flexible connectors on stoves or dryers must be AGA (American Gas Association) approved double walled. Existing single walled connectors that are kinked, damaged, or corroded must be replaced. Illegal gas shut-off valves or valves with broken handles must be replaced with AGA approved valves.

Electrical and Lighting. Service must be adequate to serve needs of occupants and maintained in accordance with the Electrical Code. Every habitable space shall have at least two duplex outlets or one duplex outlet and one switched ceiling light fixture. Kitchens must have duplex outlets. Every public hall, water closet, bathroom, laundry, or furnace room must contain at least one electric light fixture. Bathroom and laundry rooms must contain one light fixture and one receptacle. The laundry room outlet must be grounded and within 6 feet of the laundry appliance. **Any new outlet installed must be done by a licensed electrician and comply with current building/electric codes.**

All Facilities and Equipment. All required and supplied equipment, and all building spaces and parts must be constructed and maintained to properly and safely perform their intended function.

Flammable Liquid Storage. No gasoline or other flammable liquid can be stored in a residential building unless stored in a one-hour, fire-rated room or approved fire-rated cabinet. Flammable liquids can never be stored in a room with a source of ignition, such as a furnace, water heater, etc.

Condemnation/Unfit. Equipment, a dwelling unit or entire building may be condemned when it is determined to be a hazard to the safety or welfare of the tenant(s).

UNITS – DWELLING

Smoke Alarms. An operable smoke alarm shall be provided and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions in each sleeping room, in the area providing access to the sleeping area, on each story and in the basement. Battery or hard wired electric smoke alarms are allowed, but hard wired electric are recommended. Battery replacement is owner's responsibility. Alarm placement must be no farther away than 12" from the ceiling if placed on the wall. Best location is the ceiling.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms. State Statute requires an operable carbon monoxide alarm be provided and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer. Instructions as follow:

- Alarm shall be placed within 10 feet of each room lawfully use for sleeping purposes.
- Alarm must either be hardwired into the electrical wiring, directly plugged into an electrical outlet without a switch, or battery powered.
- Tampering of the alarm by removal of batteries or pending inoperable in any way is prohibited
- Exceptions may apply for certain multifamily dwellings and state-operated facilities depending on type of appliances. For further information on these exceptions please contact the Life Safety office at 218-730-4380.

Deadbolt Locks/Doors. Required entry doors must be equipped with 1" throw deadbolt locks with interior turning knob, no higher than 48" from bottom of door. Doors must be substantially secure from illegal entry, and if replaced, must be replaced with solid core, wood, 1 3/4" panel or a metal door with frames. Hinges must be placed on the inside of the door or tamper proof hinges installed.

Patio-Glider Doors with Windows. A removable track filler or key-operated vertical or horizontal bolt lock on patio and glider windows is suggested. A wood filler strip or removable screw in upper track of windows should be installed to prevent them from being lifted out of track.

Floors/Walls/Paint/Cabinets/Woodwork. Must be in sound condition and good repair. All paint must be non-lead-based. Any peeling or flaking paint must be removed and repainted.

Window Locks. All windows must be equipped with secure locks when they are within 6 feet of grade.

Space Heaters. Subject to all requirements of servicing/cleaning (see Furnace/Heating Plant) and must be serviced by a qualified contractor or service company. All regulations of the Mechanical Code must be applied. Unvented fuel-burning appliances are not allowed.

Portable Space Heaters. During periods of severe cold weather or if the permanent heating system is faulty or deemed unsafe portable electric space heaters shall be allowed for **temporary** use. The heater must be a UL or F.M. listed & approved unit. The heater must be plugged directly into an approved outlet without the use of extension cords.
Recommendation: Heaters have "tip-over" safety shut-off feature.

Bathroom Light/Ventilation. Every bathroom must have a window open able to the outside, or an approved mechanical ventilation system, venting directly to the exterior.

Toilet/Hand Sink/Tub/ Shower. Each dwelling unit must contain a bathroom with toilet, hand sink, and tub or shower installed and maintained in accordance with the State Plumbing Code.

Roof Drains. The down spouts or rain water stacks which were or are not connected to the City sewer shall be disconnected and run outside as per requirements for City Sewer Division. For further information, please contact the City Water Quality Specialist at 218-730-4051.

Bathroom Floor. Must be impervious to water. Carpeting not allowed. Cracked or missing tiles must be repaired/replaced.

Electrical Outlets. See Electrical.

Extension Cords. Not allowed for permanent wiring. Those extension cords with circuit breakers are also not legal. The overload on the wiring in the wall produces heat and can be a fire hazard.

Occupant Load. Dwelling units must contain the following:

Total unit gross floor area

1 occupant- 150 sq. ft.

2 or more occupants- 100 sq. ft. / person

Gross sleeping room/floor area

1 occupant- 70 sq. ft.

2 or more occupants- 50 sq. ft. / person

Tenant Sanitation/Responsibilities. Occupants are required to maintain their unit in a clean and sanitary condition and dispose of refuse in the containers provided by the owner. They are also required to keep supplied fixtures clean and sanitary and use reasonable care in their use and operation. If they furnish any fixtures of their own, they must be installed and maintained in accordance with the Building Code.

Multiple Dwelling Requirements

FIRE SYSTEMS / EQUIPMENT

Fire Alarm System. Automatic detection fire alarm system required for apartment buildings of 16 or more units, or three stories are above grade.

Fire Alarm Testing. Fire alarm tests must be done yearly by a qualified contractor. Documentation must be uploaded to <https://www.thecomplianceengine.com/> by the owner or testing company.

Sprinkler System Testing. Sprinkler systems must be tested annually in accordance with their respective standards by qualified personnel and tagged at or near the main system riser. Documentation must be uploaded to <https://www.thecomplianceengine.com/> by the owner or testing company.

Fire Extinguishers. A 2A10BC fire extinguisher must be available in the hall within 75 feet of any apartment door on the same level or a 2A10BC fire extinguisher in each apartment. Laundry/boiler rooms must have a fire extinguisher within 75 feet travel distance.

Fire Extinguisher Servicing. Extinguishers must be inspected and tagged every year by qualified personnel and hydrostatically tested by a qualified company every six years.

Fire Separation / Apartment. One-hour fire resistive wall & ceiling separation with a 20-minute self-closing fire door (closer shall be UL or FM listed & approved) is required in buildings with three or more units.

Fire Separation / Basement. One-hour fire resistive separation is required in incidental areas of 100 sq ft or more (i.e. basements or storage areas) of three or more-unit building. Allowable construction is as follows:

1. Existing lath & plaster in good condition (Fire Official approval is required) or
2. New 5/8" type "X" gypsum board or
3. An approved sprinkler system (requires minimum 1" water services to building) or
4. Spray applied fire resistant coating (UL or FM listed & approved) **Building Official approval is required for product & application**
5. Fire-rated suspended ceiling system

Exception. Incidental area(s) with no combustibles/flammable storage and no tenant access. All doors exiting these areas must be self-closing, one-hour, fire-rated assembly (door, frame, door handle, hinges, & self-closer must be UL or FM listed and approved).

Fire Separation / Furnace Room. In any furnace room containing a heating appliance that exceeds 400,000 BTU per hour input must have walls & ceilings of one-hour fire resistive construction with a self-closing one-hour fire door assembly (door, frame, door handle, hinges, & self-closer must be UL or FM listed & approved).

Fire Emergency Plan. All R-2 apartment buildings (3 or more units) must have a fire emergency guide which shall describe the location, function and use of fire protection equipment and appliances available for use by residents, including fire alarm systems, smoke alarms and portable fire extinguishers. Guides shall include an emergency evacuation plan for each dwelling unit. A copy of the emergency guide shall be given to each tenant prior to initial occupancy.

EXITS

Number of Exits. A second exit must be provided from the second floor when the occupancy load exceeds ten and from the third floor and above at all times.

Exit Obstructions. All exits to the building must always be unobstructed. No storage is allowed in stairwells, corridors, or in front of doors.

Corridor Ratings. Exit corridors that serve more than ten people (2,000 square feet of living space) are required to be one-hour, fire-rated. All doors entering that corridor must be twenty-minute, fire-rated with a UL or FM approved self-closing device.

Exception. No corridor fire rating required if the building is fully sprinklered.

Fire Door Obstructions. Fire doors must not be blocked open, secured shut or obstructed with storage. Self-closures must be in operable condition. **REPEATED VIOLATION OF BLOCKING OPEN FIRE DOORS WILL RESULT IN REVIEW OF THIS CONDITION WITH THE FIRE MARSHAL FOR APPROVED METHOD OF CORRECTION.

Stair Enclosures / Chutes – Stairs that serve three to five levels must be enclosed with one-hour fire-rated enclosures or the building must have a sprinkler system. Six levels or more MUST have one-hour fire rated enclosures. Doors entering these stairwells must be one-hour rated assemblies.

Stairway Identification. Stairways serving four or more stories must be identified with signs on each floor level that clearly indicate the floor level and whether there is roof access.

Apartment Door Closures. Apartment doors entering stairwells must be one-hour, fire-rated with a UL or FM approved self-closures. Apartment doors entering corridors that serve ten or more occupants must have operable UL or FM approved self-closures and doors must be 20-minute fire-rated.

Exit Illumination. All common halls and inside stairways must be lit with a minimum illumination of one foot-candle per square foot. Exterior exits and entryways are required to be illuminated a minimum of one foot-candle at grade level.

Exit Signs. Illuminated exit signs are required when there is more than one exit from a story/space unless built under a previous Building Code in accordance with that Code.

Emergency Lighting. Required in common hallways or spaces with two or more exits. Emergency lighting must be maintained at all times and tested monthly.

Hi-Rise Requirements

In addition to the residential requirements above, hi-rise buildings (75' or higher) have the below requirements.

Fire Alarm System. Must be installed in accordance with the Building Code standards for hi-rise, including voice communication, public address system, central control station, and HVAC smoke detection.

Voice Communication. Activation of any detection or other initiating device must sound an alert signal in designated areas followed by voice instructions giving appropriate direction and instructions to occupants.

System Tests. All sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, stand pipes, smoke and heat ventilators, smoke removal systems, and other fire protective or extinguishing systems must be tested and maintained in accordance with nationally recognized standards (quarterly for hi-rise) and documentation must be uploaded to <https://www.thecomplianceengine.com/> by the owner or testing company.

Manual Shut-Down or Air Handling. Each air distribution system must be equipped with a manually operated device that will stop the operation of supply, return, and/or exhaust fans in an emergency.

Stairwell Unlocking. Stairwell doors into exit stairways/enclosures must be unlocked from the stairway side on at least every fifth floor. These doors must be identified from the stairwell side. There are exceptions for door locking mechanisms deactivated by the fire alarm system.

Duct Detectors. Smoke detectors must be installed in the main return and exhaust plenum of each air conditioning system and located in a serviceable area downstream of the last duct inlet, and at each connection to a vertical duct or riser serving two or more stories from a return air duct or plenum of an air conditioning system.