



**CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY**  
**FIRE • POLICE • SHERIFF**  
**9-1-1 • COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**  
**CRIME PREVENTION & CONTROL • SAFE CITY**

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**TO:** Apartment, Condominium, and Townhouse Complex Management and Homeowners' Associations

**FROM:** Denver Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division

**RE:** **FIRE SAFETY INSPECTIONS**

The City and County of Denver is mandated to conduct periodic inspections of all commercial, educational, institutional and multi-family residential buildings. This is a program administered by Denver's Fire Department, whose personnel are responsible for conducting periodic fire prevention inspections of the premises of every multi-family property within the City and County of Denver.

Fire in a multi-family residential complex often involves more than one unit. Many occupants may be affected. The dense nature of multi-family residential living in close proximity of other residences allows for the spread of smoke, heat and fire to adjacent units. For many years, Denver's Fire Department has enjoyed and benefited from a close relationship with the multi-family residential community and have reduced the number and severity of the fires that have occurred in multi-family residential complexes.

The purpose of this letter is to familiarize you with the inspection process and summarize the kinds of safety concerns that we check for.

**Frequency**

Your fire safety inspection normally takes place just once a year. If your residential facility is a multi-building one, you will receive a second visit as explained below. You will be contacted before the inspectors arrive to ensure that the timing is convenient for you so that you or your designated representative can accompany the inspector on their walk-through of the property.

- **Most single-building apartment, condominium and townhome facilities** receive a basic fire inspection once a year performed by firefighters from the local fire station. A fee is charged; see Fees, below.
- **Most multi-building apartment, condominium and townhome facilities** receive an in-depth fire safety inspection once a year performed by Fire Prevention personnel. A fee is charged; see Fees, below. In addition, firefighters from the local fire station will visit at another time during the year to perform a pre-fire plan (no fee).

### **Process**

Denver Fire Department firefighters and/or fire protection engineers inspect each multi-family residential structure and list any hazards identified the management or homeowners' association (HOA) on a written report; you will receive a copy. If the property has interior public areas (corridors, laundry rooms, utility enclosures, fire safety equipment enclosures, etc.) these areas are inspected as well as the exterior features (balconies, decks, etc.). If there are no interior public areas, the exterior features are inspected. Although city ordinance permits inspection of the individual residential units, we do not inspect them unless specifically requested by the resident or if the property management or HOA requests such an inspection, reporting a serious hazard (i.e., hoarding, construction work without benefit of City Permit, hazardous operation, etc.) Your office is also required to collect and keep information about smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarms and portable fire extinguishers in the individual units (see pages 4-5).

If no safety issues are identified during the inspection, the inspector will ask you to sign, on a tablet computer or paper, to confirm that you were present during the inspection. In most cases, the inspector can give you the report immediately, either by email or hard copy, confirming that the property passed the inspection. If safety issues are identified, you will be asked to address them, and if they cannot be addressed on the spot, you will receive a written Order to Comply, which will be followed by one or more additional inspections until all the issues have been resolved.

### **Fees**

Shortly after your fire safety inspection or re-inspection, usually within a week, we will mail you (via postal mail) an invoice for the inspection. Fees are based on size of property and type of occupancy use. The fee program has been in place since 2001, when the City Finance Office first established fees to recover the costs associated with fire safety inspections, including staff time, report time, and re-inspections. All fees are posted at [denvergov.org/fire](http://denvergov.org/fire) (search for "inspection fee table." If you have a question about the fee for your property, please feel free to contact us.

### **What the Inspectors Will Evaluate**

In a typical year, the Denver Fire Department responds to around 150 fires in multi-family residential complexes. The primary goal of the inspection program is to identify and remove potential fire and life safety hazards in a multi-family residential complex's public areas. During the inspection, the DFD inspectors will use the inspection process as an opportunity to inform management and the HOA about the potential fire hazards common to these properties including:

- Cooking – indoors and outdoors – the leading cause of fire in multi-family residential complexes. Outdoor grilling regulations are strictly enforced.
- Portable heaters – the second leading cause of fire in multi-family residential complexes.
- Smoking – including smoking while using long-term therapeutic oxygen – fires started by smoking materials cause more fatalities than any other type of fire.

- Candle safety – most candle fire occur during the months of December and January.
- Clothes dryers – annually, there are around 12,700 clothes dryer fires in multi-family residential complexes in the United States
- Arson prevention – multi-family residential complexes are frequently the target of an arson crime. Control of dumpsters and of combustible material accumulation and vegetation can help prevent arson.

During the inspection process, the inspectors also check:

- The street address or unit number of individual residential units must be clearly marked and visible from the street or roadway. All numbers/letters shall be a maximum of 4 inches in height and on a contrasting background.
- Emergency vehicle access lanes (fire lanes) must remain clearly marked in accordance with City ordinance. An obstructed fire lane can impede proper emergency vehicle access to fire hydrants and residential units. A ladder truck can be eight to nine feet wide and up to 50 feet long.
- Fire department hose connectors must have clear access and be free of vegetation.
- Each building level is required to have portable fire extinguishers (2A10BC) in approved locations on normal routes of travel and be accessible within 75 feet from the residential unit main entry door. Portable fire extinguishers must be annually inspected and serviced by an individual licensed by the Denver Fire Department.
- All access control gates or barriers and key boxes must comply with original approvals and operational requirements.
- Only very small amounts of flammable liquid can be stored, and it must be in an approved listed container. A “no smoking” sign must be provided in the area of the storage.
- A pneumatic test of gas piping shall be tested at least every five (5) years in accordance with the International Plumbing Code by a plumber licensed by the City and County of Denver. A written record and permit shall be maintained and made available to the Fire Department upon request.

### **Swimming Pools**

- Swimming pools must be surrounded by a 48-inch-high fence, with no openings larger than 4 inches and with a self-closing, self-latching gate, an emergency telephone must be readily available adjacent to the pool. Many residential complexes have outside pool companies that provide pool services, however, for residential complexes that maintain their own swimming pools the following applies:
  - Most pool chemicals are classified as oxidizers and present a serious fire or explosion hazard. The classes of oxidizers vary with each pool chemical. The most common type of pool chemical is Calcium Hypo Chloride “SHOCK or Cal Hypo” typically a class 3 oxidizer. Classification of Calcium Hypo Chloride breaks down as follows:
    - 50% or less by weight Class 2 oxidizer
    - Over 50% by weight Class 3 oxidizer
  - Classifications can be verified via an MSDS or from the manufacturer. Facilities that utilize Class 3 oxidizers for maintenance purposes only are allowed to have a

maximum of 200 lbs. without being classified as Group H Occupancy. However, a hazardous material permit is required when the amount on hand totals 10 lbs. (solid) or 1 gallon (liquid). When oxidizers present a health hazard (i.e., are categorized as toxic or highly toxic), the permit amounts are as follows:

- Toxic – 100 lbs. (solid) and 10 gallons liquid
- Highly Toxic – Any amount for solids and liquids

When an oxidizer presents both a physical hazard and a health hazard, the permit requirement is based on the lesser amount.

Oxidizers should be stored in their original container and in a dry well ventilated area separated from incompatible materials such as motor oils, transmission fluids and other solvents. When cabinets are utilized, they must be hazardous material cabinets listed for such use. Make sure to store chemicals according to the manufacturer's instructions. Chlorine needs to be on a pallet 4 inches off the floor, which is a good idea anyway because it makes leaks easier to spot. You can't store more than 200 pounds dry or 20 gallons of liquid chlorine without a special permit. Your pool chemical storage area should be marked as such.

### **Portable Fire Extinguishers**

- **Portable Fire Extinguishers** – Every multi-family residential facility must have one or more portable fire extinguishers, regardless of any other type of fire protection provided, even if the property is equipped with automatic fire sprinklers. Inspection, testing and maintenance requirements are outlined on the enclosed Residential Fire Safety handout. Placement requirements are as follows:
  - If the facility has interior egress corridors, the portable fire extinguishers must be mounted in those corridors.
  - If the facility does not have egress corridors, the extinguishers should be mounted on the exterior of the building adjacent to exit stairways.
  - In both situations, the portable fire extinguishers must be located within 75 feet line of travel of all areas of the living unit; or one 2A:10BC portable fire extinguisher located within each living unit.
  - If the portable fire extinguishers are located in corridors or on the outside of the building only, the property owner/manager/HOA is responsible for them.
  - If the portable fire extinguishers are located in the individual residential units, the homeowner/tenant shares responsibility for them with the property owner/manager/HOA, and records concerning testing and maintenance must be collected from the homeowner/tenant and maintained in the property management office. See Residential Fire Safety Equipment Report , below.

### **Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

Although in most cases, as explained above, we do not inspect the individual residential units, the homeowner/tenant shares responsibility with the property owner/manager/HOA for compliance with the following Denver City Code requirements:

- **Smoke detectors** – required in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level in every residential unit that includes a sleeping room, including single-family homes. Every multi-family residential facility is required to have smoke detection, whether battery operated or hard-wired with battery backup. Inspection, testing and maintenance requirements are outlined on the enclosed Home Fire Safety Handout.
- **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms** – required in the following locations:
  - One alarm within 15 feet of each bedroom entry door
  - One alarm on each level of a multi-level dwelling unit
  - One alarm within each bedroom containing a fuel-burning appliance
  - Where a fuel-burning appliance(s) serve(s) multiple residences, one CO alarm within the enclosure housing the appliance(s), placed within 25 feet of the appliance(s). The carbon monoxide alarm must be integrated with the base building fire alarm system. (Requires a City and County of Denver permit.)
  - For existing properties where a fuel-burning appliance does not serve multiple residences, the installation of battery-powered, 115-volt plug-in or 115-volt hard-wired alarm or combination 115-volt and battery-powered carbon monoxide alarm and smoke alarm may be installed. Inspection, testing and maintenance requirements are outlined on the enclosed Home Fire Safety Handout.

### **Residential Fire Safety Equipment Report**

Homeowners/tenants in multi-tenant residential facilities are required to complete a Residential Fire Safety Equipment Report pertaining to portable fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors annually and submit it to the property management or HOA, unless the management is handling all required maintenance. To download the form from our website, go to [www.denvergov.org/fire](http://www.denvergov.org/fire) and search for “Home Fire Safety.” From the Home Fire Safety page, you will find a link for the form.

As the property owner/manager/HOA representative, you are responsible for informing the homeowners/tenants as to this responsibility, and for collecting the forms on a regular basis and having current forms available for the Fire Department at any time, upon request, including at the time of the annual inspection.

If you have questions or concerns about any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact us. If you would like a meeting with Fire Department personnel to clarify any of these matters, just let us know.

Thank you.