

Bed and Breakfast or Small Self-Catering Inspection Information

This guideline has been put together to help proprietors and home owners wishing to provide a Bed and Breakfast or small self-catering area within their home for fire safety. The proprietor should check the current BC Fire Code to ensure they are meeting the current requirements of the code.

They should also consult with local authorities the planning and development departments, regarding the proper zoning and development requirements for the area in which they live.

Guidance for proprietors of certain small self-catering and bed and breakfast (B&B) properties

Who Is This Guidance For?

The guidance is for proprietors of B&B properties and self-catering properties which:

- are offered as accommodation for self-catering holidays, to be occupied by not more than 10 persons; or
- offer accommodation for not more than eight bed and breakfast guests in the home of the resident operator; and in either case:
- have a means of escape from bedrooms via a traditional 'hall' with at least one exit directly to the outside, rather than by way of a living or kitchen area;
- do not have letting or guest accommodation below a ground floor or above a first floor;
- do not act as the principal residence for paying guests;
- do not have any storey area over 200m² internal floor space.

The guidance is not intended to cover private dwellings out with the scope of houses in multiple occupation, small hotels, boarding houses, and hostels.

This guide applies only to fire safety. Additionally, building regulations apply to the construction of new premises or conversions, alterations or extensions to existing premises intended to be used for B&B or self-catering. If in doubt you should contact your local authority building standards department for further advice.

For B&B and self-catering properties out of scope of this guide you should refer to other guidance for your community.

Fire safety requires any person who has control of the premises to carry out an assessment to identify risks to the safety of persons in respect of harm caused by fire in the premises. It also requires them to take fire safety measures which are reasonable to ensure the safety of persons.

As the owner or operator you are likely to be the best person to know about the risks on your own premises and how they can be controlled. You should therefore be able to carry out the fire safety risk assessment yourself.

Guidance on the steps you should take are provided at the end of this document.

Your fire and rescue service will not carry out a fire safety risk assessment for you, but will be able to give you information and advice. They may also visit your premises, ask about your fire safety risk assessment and examine the fire safety measures. If they are not satisfied with the steps you have taken, they could take formal enforcement action. As an initial step, however, they are more likely to work with you to help you take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of your guests.

Checklist: Common Fire Service Requirements

- **Address:** must be visible from road and lane, free from foliage, trees, etc. and in a contrasting colour.
- **Aisle ways:** must provide a clear access to exits.
- **Decorations:** must be non-combustible or treated.
- **Drapes:** must be treated.
- **Emergency lighting:** may be provided by battery packs with remote and attached heads, or by emergency generators that will illuminate specified A/C fixtures or remote light heads. Must be operational, with no visible damage, and serviced and tagged annually by a certified technician.
- **Exit doors:** must not be locked or blocked from either the inside or outside. Must be unlocked from the inside when the building is occupied. Must have panic hardware that releases when a force of 20 pounds or less is applied.
- **Exit signs:** must be visible and remain illuminated at all times the building is occupied.
- **Extension cords:** kept to a minimum and not overloaded.
- **Fire alarm systems:** must have a working A/C power-on bulb and be in good working condition with no audible or visual damage. Must have a current service tag (within the last 12 months) and up-to-date logbook.

Alarms should be powered by either:

- a long-life tamper-proof lithium battery or equivalent; or

- Mains electricity (with an additional stand-by supply in the form of a battery or capacitor).

In all cases, smoke alarms should also be installed in each bedroom.

A carbon monoxide detector should be installed if the area is attached to a garage, has a wood stove or fireplace, or has gas for heating or cooking.

Alarms should be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

You should establish a system which ensures regular testing and maintenance of the alarms.

If long-life battery powered systems are used you should consider installing mains-powered alarms permanently wired to a circuit when the lifetime of the battery is ended or when repair or redecoration work is being carried out to the property.

- **Fire doors:** must not be blocked or wedged open, including stairwell doors. Must have closures and no wedges to hold open fire rated doors.

A door between a room (other than a bathroom or toilet) and any corridor, hall or stair which would be the route out in the case of a fire need not be a fire door but should be capable of holding back smoke and fire for sufficient time to maximise the chances of occupants escaping safely. An example of a suitable door type is a solid timber door.

The following check list will help you decide if you need to repair, adjust or replace any door:

- the door should be close fitting to its frame with gaps of no more than 4mm;
- the door should have no sizeable splits, gaps or cracks and should not be warped;
- non-fire-rated glazing may fail early in a fire;
- hollow type doors offer poor protection.

For a two-storey property with sleeping accommodation on the upper floor, it is important that if a fire occurs in a ground floor room off the escape route while persons are asleep, the door of the room on fire remains closed. Where there are more than three bedrooms on the upper floor of a two-storey property, these ground floor doors should be provided with self-closing devices.

Occupiers should be advised of the benefit of keeping doors closed at night to hold back fire and smoke.

Doors will only be effective at holding back fire and smoke if the corridor or hall structure also has the ability to hold back fire.

Exit Door Locks

Although there may be a key operated lock on the door, to facilitate escape from fire the final exit door should be capable of being easily opened from the inside without the use of a key, although it remains the personal choice of the occupiers how to secure the door.

- **Fire Safety Plan:** Must be reviewed and revised yearly.

You should prepare a plan of what action any occupier should take in the event of fire. This would include the route of escape, how to raise the alarm and how to call the Fire Department. This should be available for each party arriving at the premises. A simple notice could be fixed in an easily visible place such as the hall, and/or be provided within a welcome pack. You should also ensure that the occupier is advised of basic precautions such as closing doors at night to inhibit the spread of smoke, and the need to inform the owner or agent if any equipment develops a fault (such as electrical or smoke alarm defects).

- **Fire hydrants:** must be accessible, free of damage and serviced within the specified date. Private hydrants require annual service, with records kept on site.
- **Fire separations:** must have no holes or openings that compromise their purpose.
- **Garbage disposal:** commercial containers must be located three metres from combustible buildings. If inside, commercial containers should have tight-fitting lids and be in fire-separated rooms.
- **Occupant load:** Submit occupant load calculation per B.C. Fire Code requirements to Fire Prevention Branch Office for review.
- **Portable fire extinguishers:** must:
 - Be located adjacent to corridors or aisles that provide access to exits.
 - Be mounted in a visible location, accessible, and serviced and tagged at least once every 12 months by a certified technician.
 - Be full and functioning (no damage, corrosion, leaks, malfunctioning parts or clogged nozzles).
 - Have a minimum rating 2A-10BC.

A portable fire extinguisher should be provided in the kitchen for the occupants to use.

- **Portable heaters:** must be an approved type and kept away from combustibles.

How to Carry Out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment

The steps below are intended to help you through the process of carrying out an assessment of the fire risks in your property.

Step 1: Who is at risk?

Consider the numbers and capability of people who may occupy your property and who could be at risk. This includes guests, owners, any other visitors including cleaners, tradespersons etc. Make a note if particularly vulnerable persons are likely such as children, elderly, or disabled persons (you will need to consider the fire safety of guests with any special needs or vulnerabilities).

Step 2: What fire hazards are there?

Think about how a fire could start on your premises and identify sources of ignition such as cooking, heaters, open fires and smoking. Do family members smoke? Are there designated bedrooms where guests are permitted to smoke? Where are electrical appliances such as tumble dryers and TVs? What is the likelihood of a deliberate fire?

Consider what could burn, and act as fuel for a fire. This could include furniture, bedding, laundry, wood/kindling for open fires, rubbish, flammable liquids, solvents, chemicals or gases, cooking oil, paint, white spirit, cleaning products, aerosols, LPG, or fuels such as petrol.

Consider what could happen if a fire occurred and how quickly it could spread. The construction of the property can affect how fire can spread; it may spread faster if there are multiple layers of wallpaper, polystyrene ceiling tiles or interior wood paneling. If rubbish stored outside caught fire could it spread to inside the property or block an exit door?

Step 3: What can you do to reduce/remove risk, what fire safety measures should be put in place?

Now that you have considered the people at risk and the hazards, you can take steps as necessary to reduce the risk both of a fire occurring and of injury or loss of life should a fire occur. You may also wish to consider the risk of damage to your property, and any subsequent loss of business.

If ignition sources and fuel sources are reduced and these are kept apart, the chances of a fire starting are low. The following lists some of the actions that are advised for dwellings as part of normal community fire safety which you should consider to reduce the risk of a fire occurring:

- Ensure good housekeeping, so that storage is in designated areas only, is orderly, refuse and packaging is disposed of frequently and carefully, bins are secure;
- Ensure flammable materials and liquids are stored properly, away from ignition sources, electrical fuse box and meter, boilers, etc. Do not store aerosols in damp areas (such as under sinks);
- Ensure that electrical and gas appliances and equipment are maintained, serviced and kept in good working order. Clean extract equipment to kitchens;
- Individual heating appliances should be fixed in position and guarded;
- Ensure the electrical installation to the property is in good order, get it checked if in any doubt. Ensure correct wiring of plugs and correct fuse ratings;
- If anyone smokes ensure ashtrays are provided, emptied regularly and safely. Inspect or advise your guests to inspect smoking areas before bedtime;
- Keep halls, corridors and stairs which would be used to escape from a fire clear and hazard free and advise guests to do this also. In particular keep clear of items which can burn, or are a source of ignition such as electrical equipment, coat racks, refuse, laundry, upholstered furniture, portable heaters or gas cylinders;
- If your property is in an area where vandalism or deliberate fires can be a problem, consider security measures to prevent entrance to the grounds of the property and access to refuse storage and storage of any flammable liquids/gases.
- You should then consider what further safety measures are necessary to reduce the risk of injury or loss of life should a fire occur in your premises, for example:
 - means for detecting and effectively warning occupants of a fire which occurs in any part of the premises;
 - means to restrict the spread of fire and smoke from the source to other areas especially the escape route;
 - means of escape which are easy to use at any time by persons who are not familiar with the premises, for example guests who have recently arrived;
 - means for fighting a small fire such as a fire in a waste bin or in a cooking pan.

Step 4: Record:

It is a good idea to keep a written record of your fire safety risk assessment. This will make it easier for you to review your assessment and it will also be easier to demonstrate that you have carried out an assessment. You should also record the

arrangements for reviewing your fire safety risk assessment, your emergency fire action plan and the maintenance arrangements for fire safety measures.

Step 5: Review:

You need to regularly review your fire safety risk assessment. Is there anything that has altered the risk and means you need to consider again the fire safety measures you have in place? For example are you doing building work, maintenance or decorative work? Do you have a different range of guests such as more elderly or disabled?