



Neighborhood Notes

News for rental property owners & managers from the Office of Neighborhood Services –May 2015

Spring is here – it's grass mowing time!

The grass is growing and hopefully everyone is keeping their lawns mowed. In the case someone is not, the City enforces the weed ordinance. The weed ordinance addresses vegetation that has attained a height of 12 inches. Property owners may receive an abatement notice if they are in violation. When properties are out of compliance, the City may abate the weeds and tax bill the property for mowing.

Rental property owners are responsible for keeping their properties in compliance. If you have made your tenant responsible please work with them to ensure the lawn is getting mowed.

In 2014, ONS opened 1,122 weed violation cases.

To report a weed violation, call 874-7339 or report via the City's website at www.GoColumbiaMo.com.

Do you have Fire Extinguishers in your units?

Fire extinguishers are a requirement of the International Fire Code section 906.1 which states portable fire extinguishers shall be located in use groups R-2 (includes apartment buildings with more than 2 units). Please note that R-2 refers to a building code group and NOT to City zoning; single family homes and duplexes are not required to comply with this code. Our inspection staff will be looking for fire extinguishers during inspections on properties affected by this requirement.

Summary – Portable fire extinguishers (PFE) do not need to be in public or common areas of Group R-2 occupancies (residential occupancies containing more than two dwelling units where the occupants are primarily permanent in nature i.e. apartment buildings) if portable fire extinguishers with a minimum rating of 1-A:10-B:C is provided in each dwelling unit.

From the code commentary:

...as revised in the 2012 code, permits smaller PFEs in dwelling units of Group R-2 occupancies instead of larger PFEs in the common areas. Under the revised exception, the installation of 1-A:10-B:C PFEs within individual units allows apartment owners to eliminate their installation in common areas such as corridors, laundry rooms and swimming pool areas. PFEs in these areas are susceptible to vandalism or theft.

Where should fire extinguishers be placed?

906.5 Conspicuous location.

Portable fire extinguishers shall be located in conspicuous locations where they will be readily accessible and immediately available for use. These locations shall be along normal paths of travel, unless the *fire code official* determines that the hazard posed indicates the need for placement away from normal paths of travel.

906.6 Unobstructed and unobscured.

Portable fire extinguishers shall not be obstructed or obscured from view. In rooms or areas in which visual obstruction cannot be completely avoided, means shall be provided to indicate the locations of extinguishers.

Saturday inspections & Inspection Scheduling

ONS staff has some opportunities for scheduling inspections on Saturdays. If a Saturday inspection is of interest to you, please contact us and we will work out the specifics with our inspection staff.

In order to expedite rental inspections, our staff schedules with the goal of grouping inspections in the same area of town, with the same owner or manager and also to take them in the order of expiration. We know that time may not always work for you and want to be flexible.

If you receive an inspection appointment that will not work for your schedule, please contact our office at 817-5050 and we can find another time that will work. The sooner you call us the better so we can reschedule the inspector.

Review Rental Inspection Checklist

We don't want what our inspectors look for during the inspection to be a surprise to you! A "Rental Inspection Checklist" is mailed out with our correspondence to you. Please take a look and we encourage you to do a pre-inspection so you can catch any issues before we do. We have posted a link to the International Property Maintenance Code and our local amendments on the Neighborhood Services website if you want to read in more detail about what we are looking for.

Welcome new staff

Officer Melvin Buckner will be retiring in May. Joining ONS as the liaison from the Columbia Police Department is Officer Amy Bishop. Officer Bishop brings more than 15 years of experience with CPD in a variety of difference areas that include serving as a Field Training Officer, a member of the department

Honor Guard team, a Defensive Tactics Instructor, a Verbal Judo Instructor and a Narcotics Detective. We wish Officer Buckner well as he retires with 26 years of service to the Columbia Police Department.

Sara Ferrill joined the ONS staff on December 1 and Lisa Frank came on board February 2. Sara and Lisa are both Code Enforcement Specialists focusing on rental inspections and will add general property maintenance and residential health cases later in the year.

Rental Fee Increase

As part of the FY 2015 budget process, the City Council approved increased rental fees to fully cover the cost of the rental program and also allow the City to hire another Code Enforcement Specialist to expedite the rental inspection process for property owners.

Proposed Fee Increases	FY15 approved
Application	\$60
Per Unit Inspection Fee	\$26
Renewal without Inspection	\$43
Failure to Meet Inspector	\$34
Reinspection (per unit)	\$43

Utility information on rentals available on the City's website

On April 21, City Council established a utility and data policy requiring the city to provide on the website utility information for all residential rental properties, including electric and water utility cost and usage, and an indication of the heat source (electric or gas) being used, if known. The address location of the utility services is provided, but does not include customer names or contact information.

This new feature not only provides customers in rental properties easy access to their energy usage data, but also helps prospective tenants consider the full cost of housing when making rental decisions. The data can be downloaded in a Microsoft Excel file for easy export to other applications.

Users should be aware that utility data can vary significantly based upon individual behaviors and choices. Therefore, if looking at a specific unit in an apartment complex, it is advisable to research the utility data for other similar units in the complex. The site also includes tips on how to find an energy-efficient rental and how to be more energy efficient once renters move in.

The historical electric and water usage for rental units can be found on the city's website at: <http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Finance/Utilities/rental-costs.php>.

Occupancy Limitation Disclosures

On October 21, 2013 the City Council amended the ordinance requiring a notice of occupancy limitation to tenants. Some things to know:

- Those who lease or sublease their living unit must receive written notice of the zoning district and the occupancy limitations of Chapter 29.
- This notice shall be signed by the lessor and each lessee and shall be contained in the written lease or on a zoning occupancy disclosure form provided by the City.
- The ordinance was amended so that a police officer or city inspector may request the disclosure upon the investigation of over-occupancy. No person shall be found guilty of a violation by producing the documentation within 10 days of the request.

Please note that we do not need a copy of your disclosure or to see the complete rental application. Our inspectors may ask to view the disclosure to ensure compliance.

To learn more about this issue, access the city map with zoning information and the disclosure form, please visit and search for "Occupancy Disclosure."

Code Changes went into effect Oct. 1, 2013: Carbon monoxide detectors are now required in units with gas burning appliance or an attached garage.

Revised Rental Application Form

Please note that the rental application has changed and now has **two places** for rental property owners or managers to sign: once to indicate the information is accurate and once to agree to an inspection.

By the numbers: As of April 29, the City of Columbia had 9,761 buildings and 25,904 units registered under the Rental Unit Conservation Law.

City of Columbia

Community Development Department Office of Neighborhood Services

701 E. Broadway – City Hall – 3rd floor - *Historic Daniel Boone Building*, P. O. Box 6015, Columbia, MO 65205
573-817-5050

neighborhood@GoColumbiaMo.com

www.GoColumbiaMo.com/Neighborhoods