

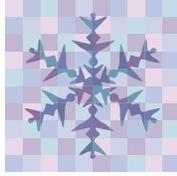


Neighborhood Notes

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

Are you ready for snow?

Winter is coming! As a rental property owner, please give some thought on how your property will be in compliance in keeping snow off our sidewalks. Determine in advance who is responsible for clearing the sidewalk - you or your tenants. If it is the tenant's responsibility, make sure they are aware of this expectation. Transferring responsibility to tenants is easier in single-unit buildings. If tenants are responsible, ask if they have a shovel and consider purchasing one for them. If you hire someone to remove snow from your properties, make sure sidewalks are included in their work.



Affordable Housing Symposium - December 3 & 4

The City will host an Affordable Housing Symposium on the afternoon and evening of Dec. 3 and the morning of Dec. 4 at City Hall, 701 E. Broadway. The event will provide a forum for education, information sharing and discussion of current and future affordable housing needs.

Guest speakers include Mayor John Engen and Rick Wishcamper of Rocky Mountain Development Group from Missoula, MT and Michelle Allen, from the City of Boulder, Colorado's Inclusionary Housing Program.

Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more details! There is no fee to attend and all with an interest are welcome to come.

Building addressing

The City encourages property owners to convert to a numeric numbering system on buildings in order to improve addressing and identification for public safety response.

Alphabetic identification (Units A, B, C, etc.) should be replaced with a numeric system that helps identify levels. For example, basement units would be 1, 2, 3; ground floor 101, 102, 103, second floor, 201, 202, 203, etc.

To learn more about converting to the numeric system, please talk with your inspector or call the Building & Site Development Division at 874-7474.

Tenant Complaints

In FY15 (10-1-14 to 9-30-15), ONS received 196 tenant complaints, representing less than 1% of all rental units in the City. When a complaint is received,

we verify that the tenant has made the landlord aware of the issue and given them a chance to remedy the problem. City staff also realize evictions and other civil matters complicate some situations. The goal of responding to tenant complaints is to have the property safe and in good repair.

By the numbers: As of November 2, 2015, the City of Columbia had 9,896 buildings and 26,422 units registered under the Rental Unit Conservation Law. This is a 23% increase in the number of buildings and 16% increase in the number of units over the last five years.

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.

Inspection Scheduling

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.

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 with your rental inspection appointment. 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.

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.

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.

City of Columbia

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