

DPD

Director's Rule 9-2014

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Subject: Building, Mechanical and Energy Code Requirements for Boarding Houses Having 8 or Fewer Bedrooms and Less than 2000 Square Feet of Floor Area	Code and Section Reference: Seattle Building Code	
	Type of Rule:	
	Ordinance Authority:	
Index: Building Code	Approved	Date
	<hr/> Diane M. Sugimura, Director	

I. BACKGROUND

This rule clarifies the distinction between a single family dwelling unit and a boarding house for the purpose of applying the Seattle Building Code (SBC). When a building is a boarding house under this rule, the boarding house shall be subject to the SBC and shall not be subject to the Seattle Residential Code.

For SBC purposes, where the bedrooms are designed or configured as sleeping units and each resident is provided with a level of independence and privacy from other residents, the sleeping units may be considered as together forming a boarding house. Although the Land Use Code allows no more than eight nontransient and unrelated persons to constitute a household, the Land Use Code does not control the application of the SBC or when a building is a boarding house under this rule.

The Department of Planning and Development recommends applicants schedule a presubmittal conference when a boarding house is subject to this rule.

II. RULE

A. Scope

- A.1 This rule provides an alternate means of compliance with the SBC for proposed boarding houses having:
- 8 or fewer bedrooms;
 - gross floor area of 2000 square feet or less; and
 - one or more of the characteristics listed in Section C, Characteristics of a Boarding House.
- A.2 When multiple boarding houses are proposed in a single structure, this Rule shall apply when it has the characteristics described in section A.1.
- A.3. For the purpose of calculating gross floor area, the floor area of the protected means of egress from sleeping room doors to the exit discharge required by Section II.F of this Rule, Egress Requirements, may be excluded.
- A.4 Buildings subject to this rule are not dwellings, and shall be treated as Group R-3 boarding houses under the SBC unless otherwise specified in this rule.
- A.5. This rule shall not apply to boarding houses that include multiple living areas, such as living room, family room, recreation room, den, lounge, great room, office, library, media room, game room, bonus room, sitting room, or storage room that are configured to be identical to rooms identified as bedrooms or are combined with one or a pair of bedrooms to form a suite.

B. Definitions

SBC 202 Dwelling Unit. A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.

SBC 202 Sleeping Unit. A room or space in which people sleep, which can also include permanent provisions for living, eating, and either sanitation or kitchen facilities but not both. Such rooms and spaces that are also part of a dwelling unit are not sleeping units.

SBC 202 Boarding House. A building arranged or used for lodging for compensation, with or without meals, and not occupied as a single-family unit.

SBC 202 Transient. Occupancy of a dwelling unit or sleeping unit for not more than 30 days.

C. Boarding House Characteristics

- The building contains up to 8 bedrooms with attached private bathrooms, and common areas like a kitchen.
- A high percentage of bedrooms are served by private bathrooms.
- The area of common spaces is less than in typical single family residences.
- The percentage of common space floor area is small in comparison to the total area of the bedrooms and bathrooms.

- A wet bar and refrigerator are provided in a high percentage of the bedrooms.
- The buildings are configured so that hallways and stairs serving the bedrooms are primarily ingress/egress routes to the exterior rather than leading to common kitchen and living areas.
- The configuration promotes privacy and independence for each occupant.

D. General Requirements

- Sleeping units shall be separated from each other, from common spaces within the boarding house, and from other occupancies in accordance with SBC Sections 420.2 and 420.3.
- Boarding houses in structures containing more than one boarding house shall be separated by fire walls constructed in accordance with SBC Section 706.
- Sound transmission control shall be provided between boarding houses in accordance with SBC Section 1207. Sound transmission control is not required between individual sleeping rooms.
- Sleeping rooms, excluding bathrooms, shall have a minimum net floor area of 70 square feet.
- Live-work uses shall comply with this Rule and SBC Section 419.
- The area of a mezzanine in a sleeping unit shall not exceed one-half of the area of the main floor of the sleeping unit. Only such main floor area conforming to clear height requirements of SBC Section 505.1 shall be used in calculating the allowable area of the mezzanine floor.

Exception: Lofts that do not comply with SBC Section 505 ceiling height provisions shall have a floor area of no more than 60 square feet or 50 percent of the sleeping unit's floor area including the bathroom, whichever is less.

E. Life-safety System Requirements

- An automatic sprinkler system shall be provided in accordance with SBC Section 903.2.8.
- A standpipe system shall be provided in accordance with SBC Section 905.
Exception: A standpipe need not be provided where an automatic sprinkler system is installed throughout the building in accordance with SBC Section 903.3.1.1, and fire department vehicle access to the building is provided in accordance with Seattle Fire Code (SFC) Section 503.1.1. The increase in the 150-foot dimension allowed under SFC Section 503.1.1, Exception 1 is not permitted.
- A fire alarm system shall be provided for the structure in accordance with SFC Section 907.
- Single- or multiple-station smoke alarms shall be installed and maintained at all of the following locations:

- On the ceiling or wall outside of, and in the immediate vicinity of sleeping units.
 - In the sleeping area of each sleeping unit.
 - In each story within a boarding house, including basements but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics.
- Smoke alarms shall comply with Section 907.2.11.4.
 - Smoke alarms shall be interconnected so that the activation of one alarm will activate all the alarms in the boarding house. The alarm shall be clearly audible in all bedrooms over background noise levels with all intervening doors closed.
 - Carbon monoxide alarms complying with UL 2034 shall be installed in each sleeping unit and at least one shall be installed in a common area.

F. Egress Requirements

- One means of egress is permitted from and within a boarding house .
- A protected means of egress, including stairs, extending from each sleeping unit to an exterior exit door at a level of exit discharge shall be provided. Construction shall be equivalent to a 1-hour corridor in accordance with SBC Sections [709-708](#) and 711.
- The means of egress shall not pass through a kitchen.
- Unless the stairway is enclosed in accordance with SBC Section 1022, the common path of egress travel shall be measured to an exterior exit door at a level of exit discharge.
- Where an egress court serves the building, SBC Section 1027.4.2, Exceptions 1 and 3 shall be permitted to apply to the egress court. Exception 2 shall not apply.

G. Accessibility Requirements

- Where the total number of sleeping units on a site exceeds 10, at least 5 percent but not less than one of the sleeping units shall be a Type A unit. All remaining sleeping units shall be Type B units.
- The number of Type B sleeping units is permitted to be reduced in accordance with SBC 1107.7. Notes:
 - SBC Section 1107.7.1.2 may require Type B sleeping units on more than one story.
 - SBC Section 1107.7.2 applies only to multi-story sleeping units rather than multi-story boarding houses.
- Rooms and spaces available to the general public or available for use by residents and serving Type A or Type B sleeping units, and common-use roof decks shall be accessible in accordance with SBC Section 1107.3. Roof decks only serving a

boarding house that does not contain Type A or B sleeping units need not be accessible.

H. *Energy Code Requirements*

In the 2012 Seattle Energy Code, the “Residential Buildings” provisions apply to multifamily buildings up to 3 stories above grade plane, while the “Commercial Buildings” provisions apply to multifamily buildings four stories and higher. Within the building envelope tables of the commercial buildings provisions, the “Group R” values apply.

I. *Mechanical Code Requirements*

- Kitchen hoods shall comply with Seattle Mechanical Code Section 505 for domestic kitchen exhaust equipment.