

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Fire Emergency Guides for Apartments and Multi-Family Residential Buildings

Updated March 2024

The Fire Code requires people who own apartment buildings and other locations with more than two dwelling units to provide a fire emergency guide for their tenants and building occupants.

Specifically, under section 403.9.2.2 of the 2021 Seattle Fire Code, owners or managers of rental properties are required to develop and distribute fire Emergency Guides. The Fire Emergency Guides provide staff and residents with evacuation plans and information about fire protection equipment in the building.

The Fire Emergency Guide should include:

- Location, function and use of fire protection equipment and appliances, including fire alarm systems, smoke alarms, and portable fire extinguishers.
- Emergency evacuation routes from each apartment using the stairs, not elevators.
- Location of outside assembly area for building occupants.
- Instructions for those tenants unable to evacuate the building using stairwells.

The Fire Emergency Guide should reflect the needs of building residents and the specifics of the building.

The building owner or manager should review and update the guide at least once a year. A copy of the plans should be given to each tenant when they move in and when changes are made.

This information does not apply to high rise residential buildings. High rise buildings are required to have Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans. To learn more, or to determine if a specific occupancy requires plans, visit

CAM 5051 Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans:

www.seattle.gov/fire/business-services/fire-code-and-fire-safety-documents#clientassistancememos

One format option for the Fire Emergency Guide is to prepare a basic floor plan diagram for each floor of the building that shows the location of fire protection equipment and appliances available to residents, including fire alarm systems, smoke alarms and portable fire extinguishers. The floor plan can also show the emergency evacuation route from each dwelling unit.

Additional fire and life safety resources can be found online at www.seattle.gov/fire/safety-and-community.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: *This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. Individuals are responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this CAM.*



Appendix 1:

Example of Fire Emergency Guide

Building Fire Safety Equipment

- The building is equipped with smoke alarms and a fire sprinkler system.
- Portable fire extinguishers are located on every level next to each exit and fire alarm pull stations are located next to each exit stairwell.

Every alarm must be treated as a fire emergency. When you hear the fire alarm or if you encounter smoke or fire, take these steps to ensure a safe evacuation of the building.

1. Leave your unit as quickly as possible, closing the doors as you go. Pull the fire alarm next to the stairwell as you exit if fire alarm is not sounding.
2. Use the stairs, not the elevators, to evacuate the building.
3. Once outside, move away from the building to the designated meeting place. Do not congregate in the lobby. The meeting place is on the NE corner of the parking lot.
4. If you encounter smoke or fire outside of your apartment and you are unable to exit using the stairs, stay in your unit. Keep your door and windows closed. Use towels or clothing to block openings around doors or vents where smoke might enter.
5. Once you have left the building, do not go back into the building for any reason until the Fire Department has given permission to re-enter.

