# ASHLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT


## INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS GUIDEBOOK

## for

## Multi-Family Residential Dwellings

## and 1 & 2 Family Rental Units

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide the owners and prospective owners of multi-family dwellings general information regarding their responsibilities in providing quality, affordable, and safe residential housing in Ashland. The Guidebook uses **Life Safety 101 (2015 edition)** and **NFPA 1 (2015 edition)** to assist the building owner in complying with the law and in providing proper building maintenance. Chapter 31 of Life Safety 101 is used for existing multi-family units, and Chapter 24 is used for 1 & 2 family homes.

Multi-family units range from 3 family homes to large apartment/condominium complexes and provide a wide array of building and safety issues that need to be addressed.

This guidebook will review the major points that must be addressed in order to maintain building safety.

- Detection and Safety Systems
- Means of Egress
- Hazardous Conditions
- General Building Safety

## DETECTION SYSTEMS:

### Fire Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors:

**New Hampshire State Law, Section 153:10-a**

Your building may contain a complete interior fire alarm or may have standard smoke detectors for the living and common areas. State law requires that smoke detectors be provided in all common areas and in each living unit. The law further requires that the detectors be wired directly into the buildings electrical system, and be properly maintained.

There shall be a detector in all common hallways, staircases and in common rooms such as basements or laundries. Smoke detectors in the individual living units (a minimum of one), should be located just outside of the sleeping areas, as well as one in each individual sleeping room.

Carbon monoxide detectors are required to be installed in all new construction buildings as of July 1, 2011, and in all existing buildings as of July1, 2013. These units shall be hardwired and placed correctly in each building. If you have any questions please contact the Ashland Fire Department regarding the placement of these devices.

In buildings containing full interior fire alarm systems, the smoke detection requirement may be met by that system. Certain buildings may be required to install a full interior fire alarm. Check with the Ashland Fire Department to see if your building meets this requirement and the type of system that is to be installed. Full interior fire alarm systems (where installed), must be tested annually by a qualified fire alarm technician and a report forwarded to the Ashland Fire Department for review.

Residents/tenants should be made aware of the following NH State RSA regarding alarm systems:

**644:3-c. Unlawful Interference With Fire Alarm Apparatus.**

A person who knowingly tampers with, interferes with or impairs any public fire alarm apparatus, wire or associated equipment is guilty of a class B felony.

**Fire Sprinkler Systems:**

Fire sprinkler systems are required in certain buildings or may be installed as an option by the property owner. Where sprinkler systems are installed, they must be properly maintained and tested annually to ensure their proper operation. A test report should be forwarded to the Ashland Fire Department. In most cases, spare sprinkler heads are required to be available in the event of a sprinkler head activation.

It should be noted that the installation of sprinkler systems can significantly reduce the fire and smoke loss and the damage from the water release will usually cost less than 10 percent of the fire damage. The Code also allows for significant reductions in other areas where sprinklers are used. Most insurance companies also provide reduced premiums for sprinklered buildings.

**MEANS OF EGRESS:**

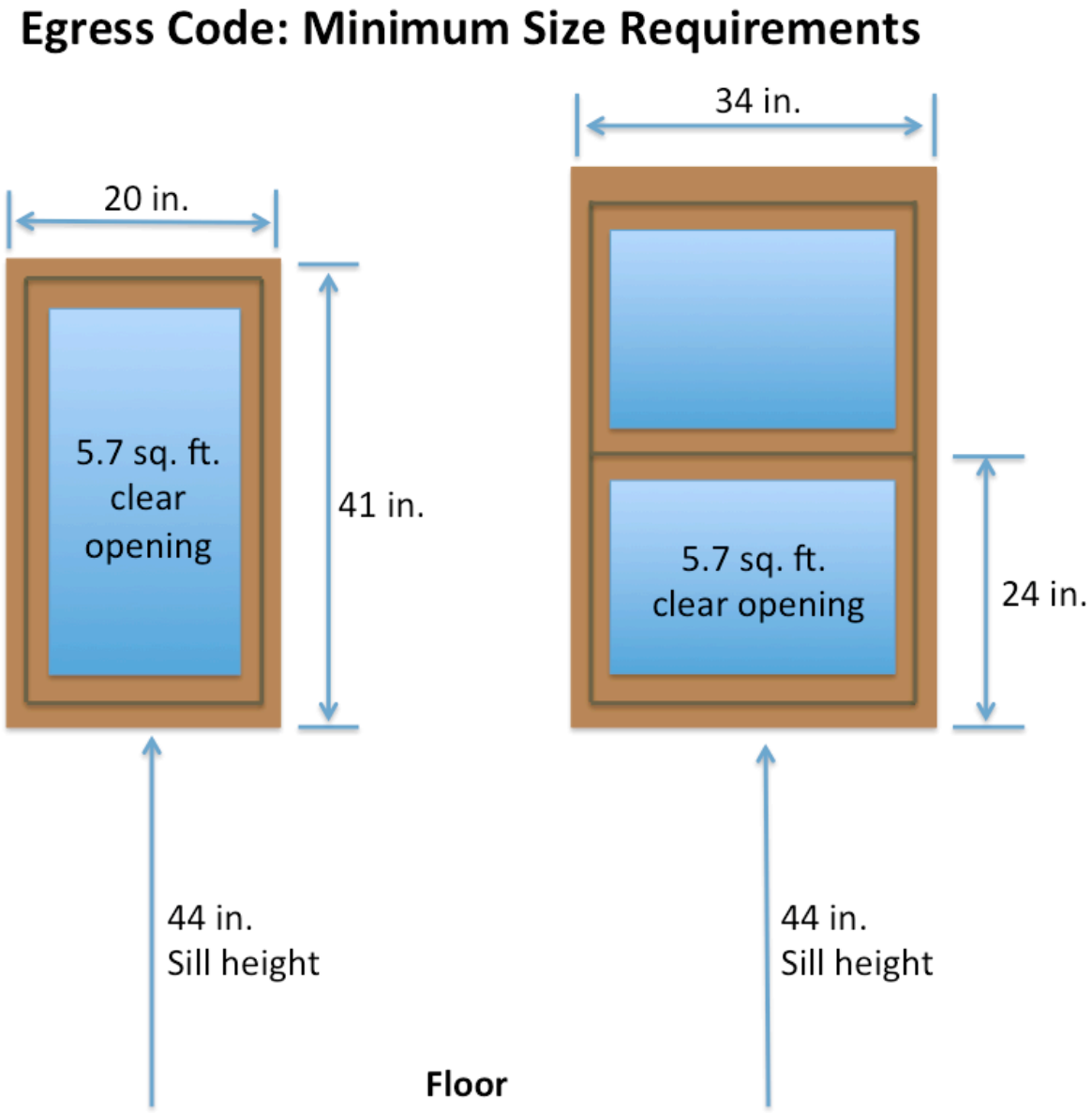
**Exits:**

Each apartment building unit must be provided with two (2) separate means of egress (exit). [***LSC101 Ch31.2.4.3***]

In certain cases, a single exit from a dwelling unit, meeting the provision of the Code may be compliant. [***LSC101 Ch31.2.4.4***, ***LSC101 Ch31.2.4.5, LSC101 Ch31.2.4.6, & LSC101 Ch31.2.4.7***] Contact the Ashland Fire Department for additional information.

A secondary means of escape must also be provided from each sleeping room. This can be a door leading directly to the outside of the building, provide access through another, unlockable space leading to an exit or be a window which meets certain requirements for size and access. As a general rule, windows used for egress must meet the following conditions;

- Be a minimum of 20 inches wide.
- Be a minimum of 24 inches high.
- Be no higher than 44 inches above the finished floor.
- Be accessible from the inside without the use of tools or excessive force.
- Have a clear overall opening of 5.7 square feet.
- Open to an exterior balcony, be no more than 20 feet above grade or be accessible to fire department apparatus (ground ladders).



**Exit Pathways:**
Exit pathways (corridors) must provide a minimum of 30 minute fire separation, [***LSC101 Ch31.3.6.1***]. Usually interior plaster lathe and sheetrock walls, in good condition will provide this separation. Damaged walls may need to be evaluated for compliance to this provision of the Code.

Doors adjoining exit pathways (corridors) must provide a minimum 20 minute fire separation, [***LSC101 Ch31.3.6.2.1***].

Doors leading into the exit pathway (corridor), must be self-closing and latching, [***LSC101 Ch31.3.6.2.3***].
Doors or walls with transoms, louvers, or transfer grills are not permitted, [***LSC101 Ch31.3.6.4***].

Common path of travel (the point leading to where two exit options are available) within apartment buildings shall not exceed 35 feet, [***LSC101 Ch31.2.5.3.1***].
The travel distance from within a unit to the corridor door shall not exceed 75 feet, [***LSC101 Ch31.2.6.1 (1)***]. Dead-end corridors shall not exceed 50 feet, [***LSC101 Ch31.2.5.4***].

These distances may be increased with the installation of fire sprinkler systems.

**Exit Marking and Illumination:**
Exits must be clearly marked, accessible and unobstructed. Exits must terminate at the exterior of the building and be provided with an outdoor path leading to a public way. Sufficient illumination must be provided at the floor or path level to assist in evacuation. Automatic, motion sensor type lighting may be used in a means of egress as long as the system is equipped with a fail-safe mechanism.

Corridor illumination must be set up where the failure of one lighting unit does not significantly reduce the available lighting.

In buildings of 12 units or more, emergency lighting and illuminated exit signage is required along all egress pathways, unless each unit has a door leading directly to the outside of the building, [**LSC101, Ch31.2.9**].

Exit signage is required in buildings requiring more than one exit and may be internally or externally illuminated.

## HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS:

### Separation from Hazards:

Certain rooms within apartment buildings may require a 1 hour fire-rated separation, or sprinklers, [**LSC 101 Ch31.3.2.1.1**]. These rooms include, but are not limited to:

- Boiler rooms containing a heating plant for more than 1 unit.
- Workshops and hazardous storage areas.
- Trash collection rooms.
- Laundries >100ft² outside of dwelling units.
- Gift or retail shops.

### Exit Stairways:

Internal exit stairways may be required to be separated from the building by a fire-rated separation depending on the number of floors/units served. An individual building analysis may be required.

### Electrical Safety:

Electrical panels must be clearly marked and be accessible at all times. Storage in front of electrical panels is prohibited.

Extension cords may not be used in place of permanent wiring.

Ground-fault electrical outlets or panels may be required in certain locations under the National Electrical Code.

Units should have sufficient permanent receptacles to provide safe power connections within the unit.

### Heating Systems:

Keep combustible storage away from heating systems, water heaters or other appliances that produce heat or have open flames.

Check the fuel storage tanks and tubing for leaks or damage. Contact the fire department in the event of a fuel or gas leak within the building.

Heating systems should be inspected on an annual basis to ensure proper performance. A carbon monoxide (CO) detector is required.

Unvented, fuel-fired heaters are prohibited. Gas heaters are exempted.

**Gas or Charcoal Grills:**
Gas and charcoal grills are prohibited from balconies or within 10 feet of any combustible overhanging part of the building, [**NFPA 1, 10.11.7 & NH RSA153:5**].

**GENERAL BUILDING SAFETY:**

**Portable Fire Extinguishers :**
Portable fire extinguishers are required per NFPA 1, chapter 13.6, 13.6.2, and table 13.6.2. NFPA 101, Sec. 9.7.4.1 requires that portable fire extinguishers be inspected and maintained in accordance with NFPA 10, Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers.
**Inspections** are a quick check of the extinguisher's condition to verify that it is in operating condition. The inspections are performed monthly, and may be done by the owner or his/her designee. No special training or certification is required for this. The purpose of the monthly inspection is to verify the following:

- Extinguishers are in their designated places
- There are no obstructions to access or visibility
- Safety seals are not broken or missing *
- There is no evidence of physical damage, corrosion, leakage or clogged nozzle *
- Pressure gauge readings are in the proper range or position *
- Operating instructions are legible and facing outward *
- Fullness – confirmed by weighing or lifting *

Any problems found during the monthly inspection must be corrected immediately.

**Maintenance** is a thorough examination and repair, as needed, of your facility's portable extinguishers. Maintenance is required annually, or more frequently if warranted by problems noted (*) during monthly inspections. Because maintenance is required to include a thorough examination of the mechanical parts, extinguishing agent, and pressurizing agent, as well as periodic hydrostatic testing, it must be performed by an approved extinguisher servicing technician.

This however does not apply to non-rechargeable extinguishers. Non-rechargeable extinguishers can be identified by looking for markings on the label. These extinguishers are to be removed from service at a maximum of 12 years from the date of manufacture, or the occurrence of any of the noted (*) conditions on a monthly inspection. Non-rechargeable extinguishers do not require the maintenance of a qualified, licensed technician.

## GENERAL FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION OF RESIDENTS/TENANTS

Emergency instructions shall be provided annually to each dwelling unit to indicate the location of alarms, egress paths, and actions to be taken, both in response to a fire in the dwelling unit and in response to the sounding of the alarm system, , [**LSC101, Ch31.7.1**]. Tenants should be aware of routes of egress from their apartment, and what to do in the event of an emergency. If the alarm system is not monitored, the tenants must understand that someone needs to call 911 in order to notify emergency services. They should have knowledge of the location and use of emergency shut-offs for heating and electrical panels. They should understand that they are not to tamper with fire detection or suppression equipment, and should report any fire safety related issues to you immediately. Tenants also need to understand that personal belongings or trash cannot be stored in common exit pathways or egress corridors.

There are educational programs for the use of fire extinguishers, and general home fire safety available through the Ashland Fire Department at no cost. Contact us at 968-7772 for further details.