

## FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR RENTAL PROPERTIES

### Smoke Alarms

- Under the Alberta Fire code, all dwelling units are required to be protected by a smoke alarm.
- A dwelling unit can include any area used as a housekeeping suite or used or intended for use as a place where people might sleep, eat and/or cook. This includes all types of homes.

Smoke alarm requirements are dependent upon the year of construction or renovation.

Dwelling units constructed prior to **July 5, 1977** are required to have a smoke alarm, which should be located between the living and sleeping area or in the hallway of the sleeping area if one exists. Multi-level or larger homes may require additional smoke alarms for complete coverage. The required smoke alarms may be battery operated.

Dwelling units constructed between **July 5, 1977 and June 1, 1998** must contain at least one smoke alarm that is wired permanently to the home's electrical system. This smoke alarm should be located between the living and sleeping area or in the hallway of the sleeping area if one exists. Where there is more than one hardwired alarm, the alarms must be interconnected such that all alarms sound when one is activated. Multi-level or larger homes may require additional smoke alarms for complete coverage.

Dwelling units constructed between **June 1, 1998 and November 1, 2015** require smoke alarms to be installed on each level of the home, including one located between the living and sleeping area or in the hallway of the sleeping area if one exists. Smoke alarms must be permanently connected to an electrical circuit and interconnected such that all alarms sound when one is activated.

Dwelling units constructed after **November 1, 2015** require smoke alarms to be installed on each level and in each sleeping room. Smoke alarms must be permanently connected to an electrical circuit and interconnected such that all alarms sound when one is activated.

Redevelopment of existing dwelling units may require the installation of additional smoke alarms that may have to be wired permanently to the home's electrical system. Contact your Building Safety Codes Officer for an interpretation of these redevelopment requirements.

Homes that have 'existing' smoke alarms hardwired to an electrical circuit, as required, can NOT be replaced with a battery operated alarm. Any replacement must be of a type comparable to the original or better.

Alarms installed 'in addition' to the minimum code requirements are permitted to be battery operated.

#### Landlords

- It is the responsibility of the landlord to install smoke alarms as required by the year of construction (above) and test them to ensure they are in working order prior to tenant occupancy. The landlord is also required to provide the tenant with directions on how to maintain the smoke alarm within the dwelling unit.

#### Tenants

- Tenants are responsible for testing and maintaining smoke alarms in their units as directed by the landlord. This may include regular testing, dusting units and replacing batteries (if applicable) when required. Defective units should be immediately reported to the landlord.

The Medicine Hat Fire Service recommends that a regular maintenance program is in place and documentation of smoke alarm testing is kept on file. This will ensure that tenants are educated about the necessity of working smoke alarms and ensures due diligence is being performed by the landlord for the safety of the tenants.

### **Bedroom Windows**

The Minimum Housing and Health Standards under the Public Health Act contain further regulations pertaining to rental properties, part 3.(b) deals with emergency egress;

For buildings of 3 storeys or less and except where a bedroom door provides access directly to the exterior or the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom shall have at least one outside window which may be opened from the inside without the use of tools or special knowledge.

Bedroom windows shall provide unobstructed openings with areas not less than 0.35m<sup>2</sup> (3.8sqft) with no dimension less than 380mm (15").

If the window is provided with security bars, the security bars shall be installed so they may be opened from the inside without the use of any keys, tools or special knowledge.

For further information on allowable window sizes and types contact City of Medicine Hat Planning & Building Department at 403-529-8374

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## Secondary Suites

A Secondary suite is defined by the Alberta Fire Code as ‘a self-contained dwelling unit that is located within a primary dwelling unit, where both dwelling units are registered under the same land title.’

All secondary suites that were legally constructed on or before December 31, 2006 must meet Alberta Fire Code Requirements. It is important to understand that some existing secondary suites may be considered ‘non-conforming’ according to the City of Medicine Hat Planning, Building & Development department however they may be illegal under the Alberta Fire Code. Secondary suites developed after December 31, 2006 must have proper development & building permits and comply with the Alberta Building Code. Please contact Medicine Hat Fire Service to have an evaluation performed on your secondary suite, the following checklist is used during our evaluation. If your secondary suite complied with a previous version of the Fire Code you would not be required to upgrade to the 2014 version.

<http://www.medicinehat.ca/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=10703>

## Fire Inspections

Single Family Dwelling and Secondary Suite inspections are performed by the Medicine Hat Fire Service on request or when a complaint is received.

Multi Family buildings that include a common area are required to be inspected by the Medicine Hat Fire Service every 12 months. A summary of the items we look for during our inspections can be found below, for a complete list of requirements the Alberta Fire Code 2014 should be referenced.

[www.medicinehat.ca/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=6378](http://www.medicinehat.ca/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=6378)

## Insurance

Tenants should be aware they are required to obtain their own insurance to cover any losses incurred as a result of a fire.

Medicine Hat Fire Service – Fire Prevention Branch



[www.medicinehat.ca/fire](http://www.medicinehat.ca/fire)

403-529-8282

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