

## Exiting Systems

- The most important aspect of fire safety is getting everyone out quickly and safely. All exit corridors, doors, and stairways must be safely maintained at all times.
- Keep stairways free of obstructions at all times. Anything which may render the stairway unusable should be kept away from stairs.
- Propane grills or barbecues, motorcycles, and combustible materials should not be stored under stairways.
- If there are interior corridor systems, ongoing maintenance is necessary. Remember, you are not the only one using these exit systems.
- Keep all storage and obstructions out of corridors.
- Maintain and test emergency lighting monthly. Check for burned-out bulbs, low and dead batteries.
- Maintain exit signs. Replace burned-out bulbs as soon as possible.
- Fire doors along the corridor should be maintained self-closing, self-latching (especially laundry rooms) and not propped open. Properly maintained fire doors can hold back fire and smoke from the corridor, allowing tenant's time to get out.
- Post evacuation plans in common areas of the complex. Each plan must indicate two exits from each area and a safe place for everyone to congregate. Provide evacuation information to new tenants regarding procedures to be followed if the alarm is activated or a smoke detector sounds.

## Address

It is very important that address numbers are easily seen from the street to assist emergency personnel in quickly locating the appropriate address. In an emergency, time is of the essence. The easier it is to find you, the faster we can help.

The apartment complex address numbers should be at least six inches in height, contrasting with the background they are mounted on and be visible from the street, especially at night. Post apartment numbers conspicuously. They should be contrasting with their background, and at least three inches in height.

## Fire Alarm Systems

Fire alarms are designed to notify residents of a fire in time to safely evacuate a building. Building managers should consider providing residents with information to assist them in planning their evacuation. Keep fire alarm systems in proper operating condition at all times. This can be accomplished by utilizing the following recommendation.

Complete regular testing and maintenance by qualified personnel. This includes, but is not limited to, testing all devices (such as pull stations and smoke or heat detectors). Clean all smoke detectors and check battery levels, etc. Documentation may be requested by insurance underwriters seeking verification that reasonable efforts are being made to maintain the system in good working order.

A trouble condition, indicated on the alarm panel by a yellow light, can be caused by numerous conditions. This situation requires contacting qualified service personnel to troubleshoot and correct the problem. False alarms, besides being annoying, can cause residents to become “desensitized” to the alarm and possibly disregard it. Proper maintenance can help avoid this situation. Occasionally, manual pull stations are maliciously pulled. If this occurs frequently, contact the Fire Prevention Bureau for assistance.

### Fire Sprinkler Systems

Fire sprinkler systems are the most effective means of controlling fires, minimizing fire spread and damage caused by smoke and fire. Sprinkler heads are strategically placed throughout apartment living areas. Activated by heat, only those heads nearest the fire will discharge water. Fire sprinkler systems do require regular testing and maintenance.

### Testing and Maintenance of Fire Sprinkler Systems

Fire Sprinkler Systems require at least annual testing and maintenance by a qualified contractor. The system is required to be certified every five years.

The system is required to be monitored by a licensed Central Station Monitoring Company which supervises the water flow and control valve tamper switches. These switches will notify the alarm company that water is flowing or that someone has turned off the system.

### Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers, when operated by a person knowledgeable in their use can significantly reduce fire damage. Training is essential. If you have a fire extinguisher available, be sure it is a Class ABC extinguisher and that it is in proper working order (the yellow arrow should be in the green area of the gauge).

- Use an extinguisher only after the Fire Department has been called. Dial 9-1-1.
- Make sure the building has been evacuated and the fire alarm has been activated prior to using an extinguisher.
- Make sure you have a Class ABC extinguisher and that you know how to use it properly.
- Make sure the fire is small enough to be extinguished with the size of fire extinguisher you have.
- Always make certain there is an exit behind you before you attempt to fight the fire. Never put the fire between you and an exit.
- Training information pertaining to fire extinguishers is available from the Fire Prevention Bureau.
- Keep fire extinguishers in good working order at all times. Be sure they are mounted in conspicuous, accessible locations. Annual servicing by qualified personnel and monthly inspections by maintenance personnel is required.

### Fire Lanes

Fire lanes are designed to provide direct access for emergency activities and emergency vehicles. Most frequently, they are used for fire apparatus during medical emergencies. When fire lanes, red curbs and

fire hydrants are blocked by vehicles, a delay in receiving emergency assistance may occur. In a fire or medical emergency, seconds count. Proper signage is very important to enforce no parking in the fire lane. The San Luis Obispo Police Department will cite illegally parked vehicles and may assist apartment managers with enforcement. Contact the Fire Prevention Bureau for information on signage wording and placement.

### Emergency Medical Services

- Learn CPR. For information pertaining to classes, call the American Red Cross or American Heart Association.
- Place 9-1-1 stickers, your address and phone number, and emergency numbers on or near the phone. Stickers are available at the fire dept.
- When dialing 9-1-1, be sure to answer all the dispatcher's questions and follow their directions. Speak slowly and clearly and stay calm. Stay on the phone until you are told to hang up.
- Provide specific information about where the emergency is taking place. For example, the building number, apartment number, nearest entrances, which pool, etc.
- To direct emergency personnel to the scene, turn on an outside light and, if available, send someone out to meet them.
- Unlock gates or doors leading to the apartment so firefighters can make entry.

### Pool Safety

Many water-related incidents occur each year. These frequently involve young children, but adults can also be victims. Water-related incidents include not only drowning, but near-drowning, which can leave a victim severely brain damaged. Also, diving from other than designated areas can cause head and spinal cord injuries if the victim strikes their head on the bottom. Permanent paralysis can result. Alcohol consumption may precipitate water-related incidents by impairing judgment.

- Adults, as well as children, should never swim alone. Children must always be directly supervised by an adult.
- Provide approved life-saving equipment, such as a pole with a hook or a Styrofoam ring, in the pool area.
- Persons supervising others should know CPR.
- Interior perimeter pool fences should be installed. Fences should be at least 5 feet in height, with self-closing and self-latching gates, which should be checked frequently. Vertical bars should not be spaced more than four inches apart.
- Keep pool area free of toys and other objects that might attract children.
- Keep tables and chairs away from the outside of the interior perimeter fence so children cannot climb over the fence by using furniture or other objects.
- Do not allow pets in the pool area where young children are present.
- Post pool rules conspicuously and enforce them. Suggested rules include:
- Children must always be directly supervised by a responsible adult.
- Rules addressing the consumption of alcoholic beverages should be considered.
- Roughhousing is not allowed.
- Dive only from the diving board, not from the side of the pool.

- Gates must be closed after entering or exiting the pool area; never prop them open. Glass containers are not allowed in the pool area.
- It is recommended that a telephone be installed near the pool, with 9-1-1 posted for emergencies.

#### Chemical/Flammable Liquid Storage

- Store pool chlorine and muriatic acid separate from one another in a well ventilated area.
- Store gasoline in approved safety cans only. Place caps tightly on container.
- Do not exceed five gallons.
- It is recommended that flammable and combustible liquids be stored in a well ventilated area, away from open flame (i.e.; gas water heaters, gas clothes dryers or other similar types of ignition sources).
- Label all chemicals on outside of containers.

#### Cooking In Common Areas

Cooking is a frequent cause of fire loss. Cooking which produces grease (such as frying, browning of meat or deep fat fryers) is not allowed unless an approved grease removal system and commercial fire protection system has been installed. When an extinguishing system has been installed, servicing every six months by a qualified contractor is required. All cooking areas, hood and ducts should be kept free or grease accumulation.

#### Barbeque Grills

- Use only enough charcoal lighter fluid to start the fire. Using charcoal which is pre-treated with fluid is always best.
- Keep the flame low.
- Never use gasoline to start the fire.
- Keep the grill lid closed or cover on when cooking. The grill should be constantly attended.
- Have an approved fire extinguisher or garden hose nearby and know how to use it.
- Let coals cool overnight or wet the ashes thoroughly prior to disposal. Dispose of ashes by placing them in a metal container with a tight fitting lid. Never dump ashes directly into the dumpster.
- Keep matches, lighters and combustible liquids out of reach and sight of children.
- Do not use or store barbeque grills on common balconies used for exiting.
- It is strongly recommended that barbeques not be used on balconies or terraces.

#### LPG/Natural Gas

It is strongly recommended that LPG cylinders (propane) such as barbeques, not be used or stored inside buildings or on balconies, but preferably in a secured shaded area outside, away from building openings and stairs. If a cylinder leaks or vents, flammable vapors may travel inside buildings.

Check rubber "O" rings and supply hoses every time the cylinder is filled.

Protect natural gas meters and piping from damage by vehicles or other impact.

### Locks/Lock Boxes

At least two vehicular access points into larger complexes may be required for fire department access. If gates are to be installed or locked or if access will be blocked in any manner, a Knox Box application shall be obtained from the Fire Prevention Bureau. At that time, a detail shall be provided, showing distances from the street, turn-arounds, etc. Gates may not be installed or locked until after the application has been submitted. Applications for Knox locks and /or boxes may be obtained from the Fire Prevention Bureau by calling (805) 781-7380.

### Heating, Ventilation and Fireplaces

Heating and ventilation units require regular service. Develop and use preventative maintenance programs for all mechanical equipment. Keep motors free of grease and dust. Check filters regularly and change them when necessary. Make sure fresh air returns/vents are kept clean and open to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Floor and wall heaters should be kept free of dirt, dust and lint build up. Vacuum them frequently, especially prior to first winter use. Provide at least three feet of clearance around all heaters and provide means of keeping children away. Do not hang clothes, towels or similar items over heaters to dry.

Fireplaces (including chimneys and flue spaces) should be cleaned regularly. Never dump hot ashes into trash cans. Allow ashes to cool overnight and place them in a metal can with a lid. Accumulations of creosote (a residue formed by products of the burning process) can self-ignite over time, causing chimney, attic and roof fires. Contact a professional chimney sweep for further information on how to care for your fireplace. Never burn papers, trash, Christmas trees or other items in your fireplace.

### Laundry Rooms

- A laundry room is another area for common fire hazards. Lint and combustible debris can accumulate behind the dryer and can ignite when heated.
- Clean dryer lint screens after each use.
- Dryer vents should be continuous to the outside.
- Clean dryer and washer motors as needed to eliminate grease and lint accumulation.
- Gas vents for water heaters and dryers should be maintained in good repair and be continuous to the outside.
- Provide earthquake strapping for your water heater.

### Dumpsters

Locate dumpsters away from buildings. Maintain at least a five-foot separation from combustible construction and eaves. The intent is that in the event of a fire in the dumpster, the fire may be contained to the dumpster and not spread to adjacent buildings.

### Electrical

Many apartment fires are caused by electrical problems. These include improper use of extension cords, damaged flexible cords, overloaded circuits, and defective appliances.

- Electrical installations and wiring throughout the complex should be installed by a qualified electrician in accordance with the National Electrical Code.  
Do not use these as a replacement for permanent electrical wiring. Extension cords are designed for temporary use only. They should be kept free from damage and the wiring size should be appropriate for the amperage of the appliance it is supplying. Use only UL-listed cords.
- Maintain flexible cords to appliances (lamps, toasters, etc.) in good condition and place them where they are not subject to damage. Replace damaged, frayed, dried, or cracked cords or replace appliances if needed.
- Overloaded circuits can occur when too many appliances are plugged into one circuit, exceeding the capacity of the wiring, heating the wiring, and possibly starting a fire. Never plug in more appliances than the receptacle will accept. Two plugs are usually allowed in a typical household receptacle.
- Heat-producing appliances are especially prone to create a fire problem if misused or allowed to become defective. Unplug heat producing appliances (toasters, blow dryers, curling irons, clothes irons, and portable heaters, etc.) when not in use. Place space heaters at least three feet from anything that will burn, or further if recommended by the manufacturer. Never use an extension cord to supply power to a space heater. Space heaters should be unplugged when sleeping or leaving the premises.
- Never allow tenants to run extension cords from one apartment to another to supply power to an apartment without electricity.

### Working With Your Fire Department

The information provided in this manual regarding fire and life safety is intended to raise your awareness of safety issues and assist you in recognizing potential problems. Ongoing education and training is essential. Contact the Fire Prevention Bureau for further information.

As a manager or landlord, you have the ability to significantly reduce safety hazards by being observant and by following up on concerns forwarded to you by tenants.

### Tenant Complaints

Occasionally complaints are received and evaluated by the fire department. The first question asked is "Have you notified your apartment manager or landlord?" If not, it is usually suggested that tenants notify the manager prior to any intervention by the fire department.

If fire department intervention occurs, an inspector will first discuss the concern with the manager and perform an inspection to evaluate the situation. If a problem exists, the inspector will then present recommended solutions to the manager and agree on a reasonable time frame for correction.

#### Manager/Landlord Complaints

If the tenant is maintaining an unsafe condition, the fire department, when requested by the manager or landlord, will determine if intervention is called for and what type of intervention is necessary. Often, as a manager or landlord, the lease may allow you the ability to act on a problem, depending on the nature of the situation.