

## APARTMENT INSPECTIONS GUIDE and CHECKLIST

1. Are address, building AND apartment numbers clearly visible?
  - a. Street address numbers shall be plainly visible and legible from the street fronting the property. A minimum of 8” in height is recommended for any new sign placement.
  - b. Building numbers must be visible from the fire access road, and are to be a contrasting color to the numbers’ background. A minimum of 8” in height is recommended.
  - c. Apartment Numbers are required on each apartment and are to be a contrasting color to the numbers’ background. A minimum of 4” in height is recommended.
  
2. Can emergency vehicles enter the access gates?
  - a. Except in rare circumstances, AFD only requires ONE entrance to an apartment complex.
    - i. Unless approved by Fire Prevention, this entrance needs to be from the street on which the complex is addressed.
  - b. All electronic gates that may be used to enter an apartment complex must be operable by a KNOX key.
  - c. A chain and a KNOX padlock are allowed if the gate is not electronic.
  - d. Entry gates shall be a minimum of 25 feet (can be 20 feet with Fire Prevention office approval) for two way traffic and a minimum of 15 feet for one way traffic.
    - i. If there is an island for electronic resident access in the middle of the entry road, it is considered to be “one way traffic” on each side of the island.
  
3. Are Knox boxes installed as required?
  - a. Knox boxes are required on any property (including apartments) that has a monitored alarm or sprinkler system.
  - b. Knox boxes should be located at the front access gate or the main office or clubhouse of an apartment complex.
  - c. Keys are required for entry into all riser rooms and for entry into the building which houses the alarm panel.

4. Are the fire lanes being properly maintained?
  - a. Proper fire lane markings must be maintained.
  - b. The markings must be red with white stenciling or white with red stenciling reading “FIRE ZONE/TOW AWAY ZONE” or “FIRE LANE/TOW AWAY ZONE” in lettering at least three inches in height. The stencils shall be at intervals of 35 feet or less.
  
5. Are the gas meters located in an area where they are subject to vehicular abuse?
  - a. Above ground gas meters, regulators, and piping must be protected from vehicular damage.
  - b. Texas Gas Service will install protective posts at a charge to the property owner. The price will vary according to the amount of materials needed to complete the job. The contact person for TGS is Charles Sorenson (465-1152).
  
6. Are the trash dumpsters placed at a safe distance from buildings?
  - a. Dumpsters shall not be stored in buildings or placed within 10 feet of combustible walls, openings, or combustible eave lines.
  - b. Fences placed around dumpsters are allowed, but must also not be placed within 10 feet of combustible walls, openings, or combustible eave lines.
  
7. Are all smoke detectors installed as required and are those smoke detectors operational?
  - a. Detectors shall be in installed and operational.
  - b. The detectors may be installed on the ceiling (not less than 4” from the wall or less than 3’ from an AC register), or on the wall (not less than 4” nor more than 12” from the ceiling).
  - c. In all residential occupancies (including apartment complexes), a smoke detector shall be installed in each sleeping room and at a point centrally located in the corridor or area giving access to each separate sleeping area.
  - d. If the apartment *unit* is more than one level, detectors are required on each level.

- e. When sleeping units are on an upper floor, a detector should also be placed on the ceiling in close proximity to the stairway.
- f. We will be checking 10% of the units' detectors, and recording the percentage of un-installed and/or non-operational detectors.
  - i. If there is a high incidence of failures, we will be required to check the detectors in all units in the complex.
  - ii. Although replacing batteries is the tenant's responsibility, it is a good idea to have the maintenance personnel bring spares, just in case.

8. Are fire extinguishers properly installed and maintained?

- a. For every 3000 square feet of floor area, one 2A 10BC extinguisher is required to be located in a *common accessible area*.
- b. There can be a *maximum of 75' travel distance* from anywhere in the complex to the nearest accessible extinguisher.
- c. Except for extinguishers that are located in individual apartments (see below), all extinguishers must be mounted in a conspicuous location, as follows:
  - i. The *top* of the extinguisher can be no more than 48" from the floor.
  - ii. The *bottom* of the extinguisher can be no less than 4" from the floor.
  - iii. The operating instructions should be facing out.
- d. Centrally located extinguishers (as outlined above) must be tested annually. A punched tag (any color, other than red) must be affixed to the extinguisher, unless the extinguisher is less than one year old (with proof of purchase).
- e. A 1A 10BC extinguisher may be placed in every apartment/condominium unit, as a substitute for the above requirements. They may also be substituted in separate office areas.
  - i. 1A 10BC extinguishers located inside of individual units are required to be present and charged. *They do not require an annual inspection, and do not require a tag.*
  - ii. If 1A 10BC extinguishers have been substituted for the larger, centrally located extinguishers, *each attached garage* requires an additional 2A 10BC extinguisher.
- f. *Detached garages* always require a 2A 10BC extinguisher.

## 9. Is the sprinkler system in proper working condition?

- a. If the complex has a sprinkler system, it must be annually inspected by a State Licensed Sprinkler Inspector and (blue) tagged. This blue tag must state that the inspection was for an ANNUAL inspection and that the test was ACCEPTABLE. If the test was unacceptable, either a yellow tag or red tag should accompany the blue tag. If the problems identified in the yellow or red tags were fixed, then a white tag should be added stating that the yellow or red tag impairments have been corrected. Each riser should have their own inspection tags.
- b. NOTE that if a sprinkler system is red tagged (or found to be inoperative), a fire watch will be required.
- c. If a sprinkler system is yellow tagged, a fire watch is not *normally* warranted, but a follow up inspection is required.
- d. Fire Department Connections (FDC's) must be plainly visible from the fire access road.
- e. Fire Department Connections (FDC's) must have caps installed.

## 10. Is the alarm system in proper working condition?

- a. If the complex has an alarm system, it must be annually inspected by a State Licensed Alarm Inspector and (blue) tagged. This blue tag must state that the inspection was for an ANNUAL inspection and that the test was ACCEPTABLE. If the test was unacceptable, either a yellow tag or red tag should accompany the blue tag. If the problems identified in the yellow or red tags were fixed, then a white tag should be added stating that the yellow or red tag impairments have been corrected. These tags should be affixed to the main fire alarm control panel.
- b. NOTE that if an alarm system is red tagged or found to be non-operational, a fire watch *may* be required.
- c. If an alarm system is yellow tagged, a fire watch is not *normally* warranted, but a follow up inspection is required.
- d. A fire alarm system is retroactively required in all multi-family occupancies more than three stories in height OR with more than 16 dwelling units when the complex does not have a supervised automatic sprinkler system with local notification.

11. Is storage causing a fire or life safety hazard?
  - a. Combustible materials may not be stored under stairways.
  - b. Motorcycles and other fueled equipment may not be stored under stairs or inside apartment units.
  - c. Combustible materials may not be stored in mechanical rooms.
  - d. Combustible materials may not be stored within 18" of gas water heaters.
  - e. Storage may not block any emergency exits.
  - f. Flammable liquids and pool chemicals shall not be stored in apartment units (see 15 & 16, below).
  
12. Are attic draft stops installed as required and being maintained in good condition?
  - a. Required when the attic space is over 3000 square feet (and is at least 30" in height).
  - b. Existing draft stops must be maintained.
  - c. Draft stopping materials shall not be less than 1/2" sheetrock, 3/8" wood structural panel, 3/8" Type 2-M particle board or other approved materials.
  - d. Small gaps which are less than 1/4" are allowed by code.
  - e. Doors separating attic areas must be of the self-closing and latching type.
  
13. Are barbeque grills being stored in or near buildings?
  - a. Barbeque pits, hibachis, or other cooking appliances utilizing charcoal, wood, or gas as a fuel may not be used or stored on any balcony, within 5' of a combustible building, or within 15' below any portion of a combustible balcony.
  - b. Electric cooking appliances are specifically excluded from these requirements.
  
14. Are propane cylinders being *stored or used* on balconies or inside any building?
  - a. Propane cylinders are not allowed to be stored or used on balconies or inside any building.

15. Are pool chemicals being stored safely?

- a. The door to the pool chemical storage area must be labeled “WARNING—POOL CHEMICALS” or “OXIDIZERS” or labeled using an NFPA 704 diamond (3-health, 0-flamability, 2-reactivity, oxidizer).
- b. More than 110 pounds of Calcium Hypochlorite, 150 pounds of other Chlorine products or more than four gallons of Muriatic Acid requires a Hazardous Materials Permit.
- c. Oxidizers (Chlorinator) and combustibles must be separated by either a non-combustible, liquid-tight, line-of-sight barrier or by providing a minimum 5’ separation between chemicals. Storage in a hazardous materials cabinet is also acceptable.
- d. These chemicals may not be stored in any building or room that is in or directly connected to any apartment building.

16. Are flammable liquids being stored safely?

- a. Flammable liquids to be used for maintenance and equipment operation must be stored in approved containers.
- b. These liquids may not be stored in any building or room that is in, or directly connected to, any apartment building.
- c. Up to 10 gallons may be stored on site without a Hazardous Materials Permit.

17. Are the laundry rooms safe?

- a. Lint must be removed from dryers on a regular basis.
- b. One 2A 10BC fire extinguisher must be accessible and in a conspicuous location, *inside the laundry room*.

18. Are the fire hydrants in good working condition?

- a. Hydrants must be maintained in good working condition. If they are private hydrants, they must be inspected annually by an (Austin Water and Waste Water) approved contractor. Documentation must be provided.
- b. Must have 3’ clear working space around hydrant.

19. Is the swimming pool protected from unwanted entry by very young children?
- a. All swimming pools must have enclosures of a minimum 4' in height.
  - b. All gates shall be equipped with self-closing and self-latching devices.
  - c. No openings in the pool enclosure can be more than 4" in diameter.
  - d. Each pool or spa shall have a telephone that is capable of immediately summoning emergency service and that is readily accessible within 200 feet from the pool or spa water.
    - i. Any other electronic means of summoning emergency service will qualify as a telephone if clear instructions for its use are provided by signage.
    - ii. A telephone that is answered by an on-site office **does not** meet the requirement.
    - iii. A telephone that is answered by a State Licensed, Alarm Monitoring Company **does** meet the requirement.
    - iv. The telephone may be located inside or outside of the pool yard or spa yard if the enclosure entry gates and doors of the pool yard or spa yard are never locked in any manner.
      1. If the pool yard or spa yard is **ever locked** (inside or outside) for **any reason**, the telephone **must** be located inside the pool or spa yard.
    - v. If the telephone is not readily visible from the pool or spa, a sign shall be placed inside the pool yard or spa yard giving a concise description of the location of the telephone.
20. Are there any other fire or life safety hazards on this property?
- a. Are exit lights illuminated and working on both AC power and battery backup?
  - b. Is emergency lighting operative?
  - c. Are interior exiting hallways clear of obstruction?
  - d. Are exterior exiting breezeways, balconies and landings clear of obstruction?
  - e. Is there combustible vegetation or rubbish too close to apts. and determined to be a fire hazard?