



Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Criteria

The North Charleston Fire and Building Department's goal is to ensure that short-term rental operations are conducted in a safe manner and to help the continued safe operations of the business while reducing potential hazards that may threaten public safety. The Fire and Building Departments will conduct an initial and annual joint fire and life safety inspection for all short-term rental units before the City issues a Short-Term Rental License to identify and eliminate basic fire hazards and educate property owners on potential risks while promoting a safe and livable community.

To help protect your investment and provide for the safety of our guests, below are a list of fire and life safety requirements from both the North Charleston Fire Department and Building Department. A fire and life safety inspection of the entire dwelling is required even though you may only be renting a portion of the dwelling. It is not required to upgrade the dwelling to currently adopted building or fire codes. Instead, as a minimum, the dwelling must be in good repair and must comply with the building and fire codes that were in effect when the dwelling was constructed. However, compliance with all items below are required.

A. FIRE PROTECTION

1. Fire Extinguisher Required Locations: At a minimum, there must be at least one fire extinguisher:
 - In the kitchen area, mounted in plain sight or mounted within a marked kitchen cabinet; (IFC 906.1)
 - In any garage, mounted on the wall no higher than 48" above the finished floor; (IFC 906.3.2)
 - Located on each floor level, mounted on the wall or in a marked cabinet, of the short-term residential rental unit, to the extent not otherwise covered above (IFC 906.1)
 - One within 30' of an outside grills (IFC 906.3.2) (IFC 906.9)
 - Each fire extinguisher shall have a current service tag from a State of South Carolina certified contractor (IFC 901.6)
2. Smoke alarms are provided in each bedroom, hallways outside all sleeping spaces, and on each floor. (IFC 907.2.10)
 - A record of the monthly test and battery replacement shall be available for verification by the fire inspector (IFC 907.8) (IPMC 704.2.1)
 - Smoke alarms shall be replaced not more than ten years from the date of manufacture. (IFC 907.10) (IPMC 704.7)
 - Interconnected 110v with battery backup recommended (IFC 902.2.10) (IPMC 704.6.3)
 - Carbon monoxide detection on each dwelling floor shall be provided where fuel-burning appliances or attached garages exist. CO detector must be mounted IFC (915.1) (IPMC 704.6.3)

B. GENERAL

1. The dwelling's street address and suite designation are posted in a conspicuous location, and numbers and/or letters shall be 4 inches in height or greater. (IFC 505) (IPMC 304.3)
2. Storage is maintained in an orderly fashion and not of an excessive nature, thereby presenting no fire or safety hazard. (IFC 315.3)
3. Stairways, walking surfaces, and handrails in good condition (free from trip hazards, damage, and instability (IFC 1031.2) (IPMC 304.10)
4. Fire emergency guides shall be provided in each guest room's main living area.
 - A fire emergency guide shall describe the location, function, and use of fire protection equipment and appliances available for residents, including fire alarm



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systems, smoke alarms, and portable fire extinguishers. Guides shall include an emergency evacuation plan for each dwelling unit and emergency number for Fire, Police, and EMS. (IFC 403.10.2.2)

C. MEANS OF EGRESS

1. At least one operable window or door exiting to the exterior is provided for each bedroom for emergency escape and/or rescue. (IFC 1030)
2. Exit doors are easily accessible and unobstructed. The door shall open without excessive effort and open to the full position. (IFC 1010.1.3)
3. Exit doors unlock/unlatch from the egress side without the need for keys, special knowledge, or effort. (IFC 1010.1.9) (IPMC 702.3)
4. Exit pathways are clear of storage or objects that restrict normal exit width. (IFC 315.3.2) IPMC 702.1)
5. Stairwells are free of combustible item storage; combustible storage is not allowed under open stairs. (IFC 315.3.2)

D. ELECTRICAL

1. Extension cords are only used on a temporary basis. Such cords are only approved for portable items. Extension cords shall never function as permanent wiring. (IFC 604.5) (IPMC 605.4)
2. The circuit breaker panel shall not have any unprotected openings (missing blanks). All circuits shall be clearly labeled, and circuit breaker cover(s) remain closed. (IFC 604.6) (IPMC 605.1)
3. All electrical junction box covers, outlet covers, and switch plates are secured in place. (IFC 604.6) (IPMC 605.2)
4. A clear access path shall always be maintained to the circuit breaker panel (minimum: 30"wide x 36"deep x 78" high). Occupants must have access to the circuit breaker panel in case of emergency. (IFC 604.3)

E. HEATING SYSTEM

1. Fuel-burning systems shall be vented to the outside and have flue/piping in place, free of gaps or holes. (IFC 603.5.2)
2. Solid fuel-burning systems shall be cleaned and inspected annually by a certified chimney sweep. (IFC 603.2)
3. At least 36" is required between combustible materials and any heating system or appliance. (IFC 305.1) (IPMC 603.3)
4. Safety controls for fuel-burning equipment shall be maintained in effective operation. (IPMC 603.4)
5. Every owner and operator of any building who rents or leases dwelling units shall maintain a minimum temperature of 68 degrees in all rooms. (IPMC 602.3)
6. Cooking appliances or unvented fuel-burning space heated shall be used to provide adequate heat. (IPMC 602.2)

NOTE: In this document, the reference to IFC refers to the International Fire Code, and IPMC the International Property Maintenance Code as modified and adopted by South Carolina.