



Red Bank Fire Department: Apartment Fire Safety

At Risk At Home: Living Safely In Your Apartment

Because families in apartment complexes live so close together, there are special areas of concern when it comes to fire safety.

Apartment complexes are simply a series of small, connected homes. It's important to remember that what you do in your apartment can affect people living six-doors down, or even in the next building.

Special hazards that affect people who live in apartments:

- Often, there is only one way in or out--no back door.
- Stairways are often built entirely of wood. If the stairwell or walkway is on fire, you may not be able to exit through the front door.
- Congested parking can mean blocked fire hydrants and/or blocked fire lanes. (A ladder truck can be 8 to 9 feet wide and 50-feet long. A blocked fire lane can slow down response time.)
- An apartment building is, in effect, a very densely populated neighborhood. (If the downstairs or next-door apartment is on fire, it can spread quickly to adjoining apartments in a matter of minutes.)
- Without properly working smoke alarms, it may take a long time before you find out that another part of the apartment building is on fire. Consequently, this could cut your chances of getting out of the building alive.

Tips for Living Safely in Apartment Buildings and Recommendations:

Smoke Alarms – YOU are responsible for maintenance and testing your smoke alarm and replacing batteries. Red Bank City Ordinance states that there has to be a working smoke alarm(S) in rental units which is the responsibility of the complex. However the renter must keep it maintained.

- Check alarms monthly (by pushing the test button & listening for the alarm. You may have to hold the button in for a few seconds for it to test.)

- Change your batteries twice a year when you change your clock. (This is not necessary if your smoke alarm is equipped with a 10 year lithium battery.)
- Smoke alarms should be replaced after 10 years of service.
- Never disable a smoke alarm.
- If a smoke alarm consistently sounds from cooking or steam from a shower, consider relocating it, do not disable it!
- Unless a smoke alarm is sounding an alarm, occasional chirps mean the battery needs to be replaced or it needs to be cleaned (vacuum).
- Smoke alarms are available for the hearing impaired.
- Place smoke alarms on each level and in sleeping areas.

Escape Plans

- Have 2 unobstructed exits from every room. Consider an escape ladder if your bedroom is above the ground floor.
- Draw and practice your escape plan with other occupants.
- Always close doors behind you. (to block build-up of smoke & stop the spread of fire.)

Access Clear / Doors

- Keep access to your apartment clear and storage away from doors and windows.
- Keep all combustible storage out of stairwells.

Addressing

- Make sure your there's a number on your apartment door. If there isn't, contact the manager.
- Post your address and phone number in your apartment for the use of visitors and babysitters. It will also be there if you panic.

Heating Equipment

- When using baseboard heaters and portable heaters, provide at least an 18 inch clearance from combustibles.
- Never use charcoal or unvented appliances to heat your home.
- Chimneys & heating systems should be cleaned and serviced at least annually.

Electrical Safety

- Extension cords should not be used in place of permanent wiring.
- Don't run extension cords under carpets or from unit-to-unit. They can easily overheat. Extension cords are for temporary use only. They are not to be used as a substitute for permanent wiring.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use.
- Tripped circuit breakers should not be overlooked, they can be a sign of a serious electrical problem.
- If you notice your lights dimming and then brightening back up periodically, this could be an indication of a serious electrical problem.

Smoking / Ashes

- Use sturdy non-tip ashtrays.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Dispose of ashes, cigarette butts and briquettes in metal containers with lids.
- Charcoal briquettes can remain hot for several days.

Candles

- Always keep burning candles within sight.
- Never leave the house with candles burning.
- Never burn a candle on or near anything that can catch on fire.
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions when burning candles.
- Do not burn the candle for longer than the manufacturer recommends.
- Trim wicks to ¼ inch prior to each use.
- Be careful with glass candleholders as they can break if the flame gets too hot.
- Always use an appropriate candleholder placed on a stable, heat-resistant surface.
- Keep burning candles out of the reach of children or pets.

Cooking

- Never leave burners on with food unattended. (fats & grease are highly susceptible to ignition.)
- Keep combustibles away from cooking surfaces.

Matches / Lighters / Flammable Liquids

- Keep these items stored away from heat and where children can't access them.
- Kids + Matches = FIRE!
- Paints, gasoline & thinners should never be stored indoors.
- Oil soaked rags should be discarded in metal containers with lids to prevent spontaneous ignition.

General

- Do not park in front of fire hydrants and do not park in fire lanes. When friends visit, be sure to remind them to park only in appropriate areas. Respecting the fire restrictions may literally save your life.
- The Fire Code states that no charcoal burners be kindled or maintained on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible patios on ground floors. It also states that no gas container greater than 1 pound be located on balconies above the first floor that are attached to a multiple family dwelling of three or more living units located above one another.
- Get acquainted with the elderly folks in your building. If there's a fire, they may have extra difficulty getting out. You may be able to help them, or you can direct firefighters to the elderly person's apartment.
- **Obtain Renters Insurance.** Apartment owners insurance rarely covers the contents on individual apartments. Take pictures and inventory your valuable items.
- Keep a good working flashlight in your bedroom and living room in the event of a power outage.

What to Do if There's a Fire

- Once out – **STAY OUT!** Do not go back in for ANY reason. Close the door behind you.
- Call 911 from a safe location (try to remain calm and answer the dispatchers questions)
- Get out of the apartment.
- Use your fire escape plan. Go to the designated family meeting place.
- Pull the Fire Alarm if the building has one.
- Try to let neighbors know to get out. Help elderly folks or families who have many children.
- Have someone meet the fire trucks when they arrive, if it can be done safely.
- Keep the fire lanes open.
- If you can't get out use your phone to stay in touch with 9-1-1 dispatchers. Shine a flashlight or wave a sheet out the window to alert firefighters that you're trapped.
- Stay calm.

Finally, swimming pools pose a separate hazard for people who live in apartment complexes. Pools must be fenced, and the gates should close and latch on their own. If children use the pool, an adult must always be inside the gate, in the pool area, constantly watching the children.