

# Renters' Safety Evaluation

Before you rent or lease a place, be sure the rental meets the required housing standards. Listed below is useful criteria for evaluating the safety of a residence.

## Consider these conditions before renting or leasing:

**Conversions** Was the living area converted from a garage or attic? Most garages, attics, sheds, and basements do not meet safety codes. Ceilings must be a minimum height of 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> feet. If the room has a sloping ceiling, one half of the room must be taller than 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> feet. Ventilation must be provided either by windows or by a mechanical system.

**Heating** Is heating provided? The heating system must be able to maintain a room temperature of 70 degrees. Portable heaters do not meet this requirement. Before using gas appliances, have the gas company check them for safety. Water heaters must not be located in bathrooms or in any room which is used for sleeping.

**Maintenance** Does it appear that the dwelling unit has been properly maintained? Look for exposed wiring, tacked-on extension cords, or overloaded outlets. Inspect for charring around outlets, fixtures, or appliance vents. Smoke detectors must be installed. Don't miss signs of obvious disrepair such as broken windows, warped or loose floor boards, or stairs.

**Overcrowding** Do overcrowded conditions exist at the residence? You may be forced to move out if overcrowded conditions violate city zoning or safety codes.

**If you rent or lease a home in the R-1 or R-2 zones, certain standards apply.** These standards include number of bathrooms, parking requirements, and square footage per person.

**Exiting** Does the dwelling provide a direct exit to outside or to a corridor? Bedrooms must have at least one window that is large enough (six square feet) for an adult to easily crawl through in case of emergency. All apartments must have a door to the outside that is at least 3 feet wide.

**Parking** Is there sufficient parking off the street? Parking in front yards, on lawns, or other yard areas is not allowed.

**The city enforces Zoning Regulations and Building Safety Codes.** But this doesn't prevent illegal construction or conversions from occurring. By renting or leasing a residence that does not comply with safety codes, you may be living in an unsafe environment.

**Substandard housing conditions should be reported** to City Code Enforcement (if living in the city) at 805.781.7180 or County Code Enforcement (if living outside city limits) at 805.781.4571