

# FACT FINDER

## Rental Housing Licenses and Inspections Ensure Safety and Comfort

*Since 1965, Howard County Housing Inspectors have enforced Housing Code standards by inspecting and licensing rental housing units*

### **WHEN A RENTAL LICENSE IS REQUIRED**

Every dwelling or dwelling unit in Howard County which is not occupied solely by the owner or owner's immediate family must be licensed. A license is also required if more than one boarder, roomer or renter occupies the dwelling with the owner. This requirement applies whether or not rent money changes hands.

Rental Licenses ensure that the Howard County Property Maintenance Code standards are met. The requirement applies to apartments, individually owned condominiums, duplexes, mobile homes, single family homes and town homes, hotels, motels, assisted living unit and facilities.

### **WHAT TO DO BEFORE APPLYING**

Out-of-state owners must designate a local agent.

Make sure sleeping areas located in the basement or any other area of the unit meet egress requirements.

Generally, an operable exterior window meeting certain minimum dimensions for rescue and ventilation is required in every bedroom.

Smoke detectors are required on each level of the dwelling unit including the basement. The smoke detectors in the basement and first floor are typically located near the stairs. The smoke detector on the level where sleeping rooms are located should be installed as close to the bedrooms as possible; typically, the hallway leading to the bedrooms. Bedrooms located in other parts of the dwelling must also have a smoke detector outside (in the vicinity of) the bedroom door. In addition to these smoke detectors, one smoke detector must be located inside each bedroom.

In single family homes constructed before smoke detectors were required, 10-year sealed lithium battery smoke alarms are all that is required. In single family homes constructed after smoke detectors were required it is possible that smoke detectors may be electrically operated. If the dwelling unit was constructed with electric smoke detectors(s) they must be maintained throughout the life of the dwelling. In some cases it will be necessary to install 10-year sealed lithium battery smoke alarms to supplement the electric smoke detectors.

Call (410) 313-1830 for more information.

### **HOW TO APPLY AND WHAT TO EXPECT**

A property owner or authorized agent of the property owner may request a Rental License Application by mail or at the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits counter on the first floor the George Howard Building (3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City).

After the owner or agent returns the completed application with the required fee, the Department sends a letter requesting that the responsible person contact the Housing Inspector to arrange an appointment for inspection of the unit. Occupancy is prohibited until the unit has been inspected and the license is approved.

Appointments are generally available within two weeks of accepted application.

**To check status of rental application, go to MYHOWARD.INFO.**

The Inspector looks for the following:

- Maintenance and proper installation of smoke detectors;
- Proper light and ventilation;
- Maintenance of gutters and downspouts;
- Properly installed and maintained heating facilities, water heater, and electrical wiring;
- Proper location of exit(s)
- Maintenance of fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, and other fire protection features in multi-family buildings;
- Sanitary conditions

The Inspector records deficiencies such as:

- Structural deterioration (such as holes in walls, windows, floors, deteriorated foundations, chimneys);
- Accumulation of garbage or rubbish on the grounds or in the dwelling unit;
- Insect or rodent infestation;
- Dangerous storage of flammable liquids, gas or combustible material;
- Overcrowding; and
- Unsanitary conditions.

If there are no deficiencies, the Inspector will give an approved copy of the rental license application form to the owner or agent and simultaneously notifies the Permits Office that the Rental License can be issued. If deficiencies are discovered, the Inspector gives a list of them to the owner or agent, determines a time limit for correction and sets a date for reinspection.

**SCHEDULE OF FEES FOR LICENSES**

**APARTMENT COMPLEXES:**

.....\$93.50 per unit

**MOTELS, HOTELS, DORMITORIES, ROOMERS, SHELTERED CARE:**

.....\$55 per room

**SINGLE UNITS** such as single family detached, single family attached, individually owned condominiums, duplexes, mobile homes, house sharing:

.....\$93.50 per unit

**ASSISTED LIVING OR GROUP HOME UNITS:**

.....\$55.00 per sleeping room

**RENTAL LICENSE DURATION**

Licenses are issued for a two year period.

**OWNERS ARE REQUIRED TO KEEP THEIR INFORMATION CURRENT**

Owners/agents must notify this Department in writing if the property is sold, becomes unoccupied, is re-occupied by the owner(s) during the term of the license, OR, if there are any changes to the contact information (change of address, telephone number, email address, etc.).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Copies of the *Property Maintenance Code Local Amendments* are available from:

Department of Inspections, License and Permits  
3430 Court House Drive  
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Licenses..... (410) 313-2455 then press 4

Inspections..... (410) 313-1830

FAX ..... (410) 313-3322

TT..... (410) 313-2323

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE** [www.howardcountymd.gov](http://www.howardcountymd.gov)