



RENTER'S CHECKLIST

(for multi-unit Apartment building and High-rise units)

Before you sign a lease:

- ✓ *Conduct an on-site inspection of the property. Ask yourself the following questions:*
 - Are there smoke alarms installed on each floor of the building and in each unit? Are there smoke alarms installed outside of each sleeping area and are all smoke alarms working?
 - Are there fire extinguishers available and are they fully charged? (Your local fire department can tell you where to get them charged.)
 - Are electrical outlets adequate and working? Do not overload outlets!
 - Are the locks on windows and doors in working order? Can windows be opened?
 - Are there at least two ways to exit the residence?
 - Are the chimney and gutters cleaned regularly?
 - Are updated inspection certificates displayed in the elevators or property manager's office?
- ✓ Ask to see a copy of the building's evacuation plan, which should illustrate what residents are supposed to do in the event of an emergency. This evacuation plan should be posted in places where all residents can see and review it.
- ✓ Ask for the building's schedule of fire and evacuation drills. The building management should hold a fire drill with occupants at least once a year. Most states also require periodical testing of building fire safety systems as well.
- ✓ When looking for an apartment or high-rise home, look for one with an automatic sprinkler system. Sprinklers can extinguish a home fire in less time than it takes for the fire department to arrive.
- ✓ Find out who is responsible for maintaining the fire safety systems. In many cases the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms and other fire safety systems is up to the landlord or property owner.
- ✓ Make sure the hallways and stairwells are free of clutter and that nothing is blocking the smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and other fire safety devices.

When you move in:

- ✓ Obtain renters' insurance to cover your possessions. Renters' insurance pays for damaged, destroyed, or stolen personal property. This insurance is not very expensive, but it is important to have because your landlord's insurance will not cover damage to or loss of your possessions. Start with the company where you already have an insurance policy, such as car insurance, because discounts may be available if you carry more than one policy with the same company.
- ✓ No matter where you live, or who is responsible for smoke alarm installation, make sure that smoke alarms are installed on every level of your home and outside of sleeping areas. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.
- ✓ Learn the sound of your building's fire alarm and post emergency numbers near all telephones.
- ✓ Be sure to participate when your building holds a fire drill.
- ✓ Promptly report any sign of damage or malfunction of any fire safety devices to building management.

- ✓ Draw an escape plan for your family. Identify all of the exits and stairways in your building, and at least two exits from each room.
- ✓ Stay low and practice crawling under smoke during fire escape drills. Smoke from fire is toxic and deadly.

In case of a fire:

- ✓ At the first sign of fire, get out of the building. Activate the building's fire alarm if it is not already activated on your way out. Call 9-1-1 or the number for your local fire department immediately after making your escape. Stay out. Do not go back inside until fire officials give you permission to do so.
- ✓ Plan to use the stairs during a fire evacuation, even in buildings with elevators. If you cannot use stairways, make special arrangements for help in advance.
- ✓ Feel any door before you open it. If it is hot, find another way out.
- ✓ If the door is not warm to the touch, brace your body against it door while staying low to the floor and slowly open it a crack to check for the presence of smoke or fire in the hallway.
- ✓ If all of your exits are blocked by fire, seal yourself in a room for safety. Close the door, place a towel underneath the door and over any open vents. Call the fire department and give them your exact location in the home.
- ✓ Stand by the window and open it from the top and bottom. Do not break the window- if smoke enters the room from outside the building, you won't be able to protect yourself.
- ✓ Signal to firefighters. Wave a light source or light-colored fabric out of your window if possible.