

Presidents Forum June 20, 2023

Clarification of Fire Codes to avoid citations

Capt. Hefferon spoke at the COOCVE Presidents Meeting on June 20, 2023 to clarify questions from Associations regarding the fire code. He stated citations and violation are given to the building Association, not the individual unit owner because they are based on common areas and egress. It is up to each individual Board to enforce the code to not receive violations.

1. Hurricane shutters: Shutters can be closed while the unit is unoccupied (Ex: Snowbirds gone for months leaving it unoccupied). If a unit is occupied and keeps only the window shutters closed, this is within the fire code as the door is an egress allowing an owner to exit the unit. He suggested Boards consult with their attorney to establish a bylaw in reference to an owner who occupies the unit and chooses to keep their window shutters closed but has a door available an egress.
2. Grills/ Propane tanks: Code NFPA1-10.10.6 . Propane tanks and any type of grill cannot be stored or used within 10' of any structure. No grills can be stored or used on balconies. The use of a cage to store tanks is for theft deterrence, not part of the fire code. All heating or devices used for cooking, such as Hibachi, propane and charcoal grills, must be 10 feet away from the building.
3. Catwalk: Code-NFPA1 14 4.2. Nothing is allowed on catwalks, including decorations. This includes corner units. The entire catwalk is considered an egress(exit) under the fire code. Window AC units in garden buildings fell under the fire code when they were built. It allowed a certain width and depth specifically for this item. All other items, on any area of a catwalk, violate the fire code.
4. Under stairwell: Nothing is to be stored under stairwells. If there is a fire, the items under the stairwell including the plastic and rubber on bikes will cause smoke on the staircase, which obstructs the ability for people to exit the building. Associations can enclose this area BUT it must be a professionally constructed fire rated enclosure.
5. Smoke detectors: A smoke detector is required in the living area, with the code recommending it be placed right outside the bathroom in the hallway. (most have a hardwired unit in the hallway) and a battery operated smoke detector in each bedroom. A smoke detector is only need in the 'living room' if it is used as a sleeping space. Otherwise, the one in the hallway will suffice for the living area. Buy the smoke detector with a 10 year battery. Do not place a smoke detector in the kitchen. Association Boards are responsible to ensure compliance with this code.

6. Any buildings over 4 stories must have a central alarm tied into each unit. Since all CVE buildings are 4 story or below, we are not required to have it, although the Fire Department recommends it.
7. Gardens: Some garden buildings have an alarm system and some don't, due to changes in the fire code several years ago. If a building completed the alarm system installation, it cannot be removed and must be maintained. If the building did not install an alarm system, it is not required under the fire code at this time. If your building has updated the fire alarm system, each unit must have a 75 decibel horn (to the pillow) located in each bedroom.
8. How do you get a key to Knox box to add new keys? Call Fire Prevention and they will send someone to open the box. Only Fire Dept can have keys. Knox boxes have keys to elevator machine room, electrical meter room, and key for elevator recall.
9. Buildings can make own ordinances to restrict storage of things they consider hazardous (like ebikes with potentially hazardous batteries).
10. Building units are required to have 3 inch unit numbers above the doorway.