

5-Year Rental License Inspection Rotation Program

Information for Multi-family Buildings
(Hotels/Motels/Apartment Buildings/Dormitories/Lodging & Rooming Houses)

This year, the Town of Ocean City is revising the rental license inspection program for all residential buildings that provide licensed short and long-term rentals (OC Chapter 14-174(e)). As part of this initiative, the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) will be conducting inspections of multi-family structures where rentals occur (including Hotels, Motels, Apartment Buildings, Condominiums, Lodging and Rooming Houses, and Dormitories). The following information is provided to assist you in understanding this new process:

How often will you need an inspection, and how will you know when you are due?

Your building will be inspected on a five-year rotation, based on a random selection process to determine what buildings are inspected each year (2025-2029). The year your building is due, OFM staff will contact you to schedule your inspection over the course of that calendar year. Pending any complaints or referrals related to fire/life safety issues, the fire inspection will remain "good" for five years of rental licensure, regardless of transfer of ownership. Highrise buildings will remain on the existing 4-year rotation outlined in Code. Owners may still request an inspection prior to coming due.

You own and rent out an individual condo unit within an apartment (condominium) building. Do you need a separate inspection?

While you don't need a separate fire inspection for each separate condo unit, the overall building in which your unit is located in will require an inspection every five years.

How can I prepare for my inspection?

The attached flyer will give you an idea of things that OFM will review during the inspection. In general, the inspection will be limited to the common/public elements of the building, with a spot check of individual units/guest rooms. PDF versions are available here:

<https://oceancitymd.gov/oc/wp-content/uploads/Fire-Safety-Checllist-for-Rental-Licenses-4.pdf>

My building was built decades ago, am I grandfathered from fire code requirements?

No. While there are exceptions in the Code for certain existing conditions, the Fire Code, as adopted by the Town of Ocean City, has separate minimum occupancy fire/life safety provisions for new and existing buildings. Older buildings not going through extensive renovation are held to the minimum standard for existing buildings, which is less stringent than the requirements for new construction.

What happens if violations are found?

After your inspection, the OFM will provide you with an inspection report that will outline any identified violations, and provide a timeframe in which re-inspection will occur. For complex violations, the OFM works with owners to develop a corrective action plan that allows for violations to be corrected over a reasonable period of time, based upon the severity of the violation and impact to occupant life safety.

Will I be issued fines for violations or will my rental license be denied/revoked?

The majority of time, written violation notices are issued without initial fines, requiring reinspection for verification of compliance within 7, 15, or 30 days. However, if violations are not corrected in a reasonable time, or if the adopted corrective action plan has not been followed, citations may be issued.

Most violations will not result in licenses being denied or revoked, as long as a corrective action plan is approved and work is being done to correct the violation. In limited cases, where the totality/severity of the violations are substantial, the associated rental license may be denied or revoked until such time the corrections are made.