

Rental Housing and Health in Alberta

This information sheet is designed as an introduction to the Alberta Housing Regulation and Minimum Housing and Health Standards.

GENERAL

All rental housing must have adequate washroom facilities, heat, water that is safe to drink, space for sleeping and utilities. To ensure safety and prevent the spread of disease, owners must ensure that their accommodation is:

- structurally sound
- waterproof, windproof, weatherproof
- free of insect and rodent infestations
- free from physical hazards

The accommodation must also have:

- clean common areas
- doors and exterior windows that can be locked and easily opened for escape or ventilation
- walls, windows, ceilings, floors that are in good repair and are easily cleanable
- an exterior that is free of debris and refuse
- a functioning smoke alarm

Water

To allow for proper cleaning and to prevent intestinal illnesses, all housing premises must have hot and cold running water that is safe to drink.

- There must be adequate volume, pressure and temperature.
- Hot water should be between 46°C and 60°C at the fixture.

If your facility is on a private water system and you would like your water tested, please contact an Environmental Health Officer / Public Health Inspector (EHO/PHI).

Overcrowding

An owner must ensure that his building is not overcrowded. A facility is considered overcrowded if:

- a dormitory has less than 4.6m² of floor space and 8.5m³ of air space for each adult in the sleeping area
- a bedroom has less than 3m² of floor space and 5.6m³ of air space for each adult sleeping in the bedroom
- a habitable room that is not a bedroom but is used for sleeping purposes in combination with any other use has less than 9.5m² of floor space and 21.4m³ of air space for each adult sleeping in the room

Smoke alarms

Smoke alarms in good operating condition must be installed in all rental dwellings. The alarms must be installed between each sleeping area and the remainder of the suite.

Smoke alarms must be well-maintained and in clean condition in order to be effective.

- It is recommended that batteries be replaced at least once a year, or sooner if “chirping” indicates a low energy level.
- Smoke alarm units should be replaced every 10 years, or sooner if malfunctions are detected.
- Dust or vacuum, and keep the unit free of paint, stickers, or other decorations that may prevent it from working properly.
- Tenants should test their smoke alarm on a regular basis and report any problems to their landlord.

Heating, lighting and electricity

- Public hallways and stairways must be adequately lit to prevent physical injury.
- The heating system must be able to safely maintain a minimum indoor temperature of 22°C.
- To ensure safety, cooking appliances and portable space heaters must not be used as the primary source of heat.
- Utility services must be available and must be working properly.
- The owner must provide a continuous supply of electricity, heat and water, unless there is a rental agreement showing that the utilities are the responsibility of the tenant.

Food preparation areas

An area for food preparation must be present unless meals are provided. Kitchen areas must include a sink, storage cupboards or cabinets, counter or table, cooking equipment and refrigerator.

- The owner is responsible for providing cooking and refrigeration equipment in good working order.
- The fridge must be capable of keeping food below 4°C to prevent the growth of illness-causing bacteria on refrigerated food.

Plumbing

The plumbing and sewage disposal system must be free of leaks and in proper operating condition.

Washrooms

All accommodation must have at least a flush toilet, washbasin and bathtub or shower.

- Washbasins and the bathtub / shower must have hot and cold running water that is potable (safe to drink).
- There must be mechanical ventilation or a window that opens to prevent high humidity and condensation.
- Rooms containing toilets and/or bathtubs or showers must have walls, floors and finishes that are smooth, non-absorbent to moisture and easy to clean.

Bedrooms

- Rooms for sleeping must be provided with adequate ventilation. A window that opens up to an area of 0.28m² or a mechanical ventilation that meets the requirements of the Alberta Building Code is the minimum requirement for ventilation.
- If rooms used for sleeping do not have adequate fire suppression (sprinklers) or do not have a door providing direct access to the outside, they must have bedroom windows that provide unobstructed openings of 0.35m² with no dimension less than 380 mm. All security bars must open from the inside and fitted with a quick release mechanism.

Electronic versions of the Public Health Act and Regulations are available at:
Alberta Queen's Printer Bookstore www.qp.gov.ab.ca and
www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp under Resources

Health Legislation and regulations are available for purchase. Please contact Alberta Queen's
Print Bookstore www.qp.gov.ab.ca.

Copies of standards are available by contacting the Health Protection Branch of Alberta Health at
780-427-4518, or by visiting:
www.health.alberta.ca/about/health-legislation.html

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

Edmonton Main Office
Calgary Main Office
Lethbridge Main Office

780-735-1800
403-943-2295
403-388-6689

Grande Prairie Main Office
Red Deer Main Office
www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp

780-513-7517
403-356-6366

2EPHB-11-002H
Created: n/a H
Revised: Dec/11
Updated: Jul/12