



Rental Registration and Safety Inspection Program

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PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

CITY OF BELLINGHAM

A Brief History

- ▶ Adopted by Bellingham City Council in March 2015
- ▶ The City of Bellingham found that establishing a rental registration & safety inspection program will protect the public health, safety, and welfare of tenants by encouraging the proper maintenance of residential rental housing
- ▶ Two component program:
 - ▶ Registration
 - ▶ Safety Inspection



Planning and Community Development Department
 Rental Registration & Safety Inspection Program
 210 Lottie Street, Bellingham WA 98225
 Telephone: (360) 778-8361 Fax: (360) 778-8302 TTY: (360) 778-8382

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: 2504 Douglas Ave
ISSUED BY: City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department
ISSUE DATE: July 29, 2015
LICENSE: RR2015-00781

This certificate of registration is evidence that this residential rental property is officially registered pursuant to BMC 16.55.040 as specified in the City of Bellingham's **Rental Registration and Safety Inspection Program** (BMC 6.15).

A copy of this registration shall be posted on the inside of each residential housing unit in a visible location. Failure to post this certificate is a violation of BMC 6.15.040(G).

This rental registration certificate must be renewed for the ensuing year on or before the date of expiration of the current registration as specified in BMC 6.15.040(F).

This rental property may be required to be inspected once every three years as specified in BMC 6.15.050(F)(1-3) to ensure it meets the health and safety standards set forth by the Rental Property Safety Inspection Checklist, available at www.cob.org/rentals.

Emma Burnfield
 Rental Registration Specialist

Note: Issuance of this certificate does not establish, confirm or validate compliance of the subject property with the requirements of Titles 17 (Buildings and Construction) and 20 (Land Use Development) of the Bellingham Municipal Code. Nor does it convey any additional rights associated with non-conformity and/or vested use of the subject property.

- ▶ Required by Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC Ch. 6.15)
 - ▶ “...no person shall make available for rent, or rent, lease, or let, to the public any residential housing unit without registering and maintaining registration of the rental property at which the unit is located.” – BMC 6.15.040

Exemptions – Registration Required

Registration required but no fee due for the following rental properties:

- ▶ 1. Owner-occupied buildings containing two units or less;
- ▶ 2. Accessory dwelling units when an owner resides in either the single-family residence or the ADU and the ADU is attached to the single-family residence.
- ▶ 3. Rental units that a government unit, agency or authority owns, operates or manages, or that are specifically exempted from such a fee by state or federal law or administrative regulation. This fee exemption does not apply once the governmental ownership, operation or management is discontinued;
- ▶ 4. Rental units:
 - ▶ a. Supported by funding or subsidies from the federal, state or a local government; and
 - ▶ b. That are inspected at least every three years as a requirement of the funding or subsidy

Exemptions – No Registration Required

Family Exemption/Director's Rule:

- ▶ 1. Housing units occupied by a member (or members) of the owner's immediate family are exempt from registering with the Rental Registration & Safety Inspection Program only if they meet the following conditions:
 - ▶ A. Family member does not hold possession of the property through a lease agreement or payments of rent and could therefore not be classified as a "tenant"; and
 - ▶ B. Any additional occupants **unrelated to the owner** (e.g. roommates) do not hold possession of the property through a lease agreement or payments of rent and could therefore not be classified as a "tenant".

Registration Posting Requirements

- ▶ “A copy of the registration shall be posted on the inside of each residential housing unit in a visible location...” – BMC 6.15.040(G)
 - ▶ Alternatives:
 - ▶ 1) Include a copy of the registration certificate in the lease agreement and have tenants sign off that they have read the contents and been provided with a copy and maintained the sign copy for the period of the lease; or
 - ▶ 2) Tenants may sign an affidavit, which is then kept in their file concurrent with the term of the lease, that indicates that they have been presented with a copy of the registration certificate and read its contents: or
 - ▶ 3) In such rental properties that contain a central shared location that is accessible to tenants, such as a lobby, mail room, or leasing office, a copy of the registration certificate listing all applicable units may be posted there. This option must be employed in conjunction with either option #1 or #2 as detailed above.

Renewal

- ▶ Rental registration expires on December 31st of the calendar year following registration or renewal

Registration & Annual Renewal Fees

<u>Number of Units</u>	<u>Fee</u>
1-20.....	\$10.00/unit
21+	\$8.00/unit

Program Late Fees

<u>Number of Units</u>	<u>Fee</u>
1-4 units.....	\$50.00/unit
5-20 units.....	\$125.00/unit
21+.....	\$250.00/unit

- ▶ Any person who fails to submit the renewal registration fee (unless exempt) on or prior to the expiration date of the registration shall be subject to late fee penalties as determined by city council in a fee ordinance.

Inspections

- ▶ All rental properties required to be inspected once every three years
- ▶ Inspection zone/quarter is based on Neighborhood
- ▶ Depending on the number of units at your property, the inspection may only be required for a portion:
 - ▶ 1-20 units - no more than 4
 - ▶ 21+ units – 20% of total units, no more than 50

Common Inspection Details

Items common for all properties regardless of inspection preference (City & Private)

- ▶ 1. Notification from City of the upcoming inspection quarter timeline **by mail.**
- ▶ 2. Completion & payment of inspection due by quarter end, unless otherwise arranged.
 - ▶ An extension is possible, but it is the owner responsibility to submit an extension request for City approval.
- ▶ 3. City will send Statement of Compliance at receipt of completed inspection and payment
- ▶ 4. Landlord is required to send written notice of the inspection to tenants
- ▶ 5. Same Inspection Checklist used by both City & Private Inspectors

City vs. Private Inspection

Using a City Inspector....

- ▶ Landlord will receive a pre-scheduled inspection date/timeframe, indicating required units
 - ▶ Requests to reschedule must be made at least one day prior to scheduled inspection date
- ▶ The City will correspond with primary contact directly with inspection follow-up
- ▶ \$100/unit fee due to the City

Using a Private Inspector...

- ▶ Landlord will receive a notification of the inspection quarter timeline and required units
- ▶ Hire a Private Inspector from the list of Qualified Inspectors (must possess a qualifying credential)
- ▶ Schedule an inspection prior to the quarter end
 - ▶ Only for units indicated in the notification
- ▶ \$45/unit fee due to the City in addition to any fee set by the Private Inspector.

Landlord Responsibility

The Landlord is responsible for notifying the City of any:

- ▶ Change of inspection preference (must be prior to inspection date if already scheduled)
- ▶ Rescheduling requests
- ▶ Requests for extension
 - ▶ Extensions only available for completion of the inspection/repairs (no extensions for fee)
- ▶ Changes to status of the property
 - ▶ Can include: sale of property, exemptions, change of use
- ▶ Changes to contact information

Inspection Run-Down

- ▶ **What a Rental Inspection IS and IS NOT**

- ▶ **IS:** a health and safety inspection

- ▶ **IS NOT:** a building code inspection OR overall condition inspection

- ▶ **What to expect the day of inspection:**

- ▶ 2 – hour inspection window

- ▶ 3-6 properties scheduled within one window

- ▶ Avg. inspection time 15-20

- ▶ Follow-up from admin staff 1-2 days following the inspection with next steps

Inspection Results

- ▶ Passed
- ▶ Passed w/ conditions
- ▶ Failed (no fee)
- ▶ Failed re-inspection (\$50.00/unit fee)
- ▶ Missed Appointment (\$25.00/property fee)

Inspection Corrections

▶ Common Correction Items

- ▶ Smoke & CO Alarms
- ▶ Exposed or unprotected wiring
- ▶ Loose or ineffective guards/railings
- ▶ Inoperable or insufficient ventilation in bathrooms
- ▶ Inoperable or inadequate egress windows
- ▶ Address should be plainly legible and visible from street
- ▶ Bathroom tub, toilet, or sink showing signs of leaks or insufficient sealing
- ▶ Locks must be operable from inside without the use of a key

Non-Compliance & Code Enforcement

- ▶ **It is NOT the goal of the City to send anyone to code enforcement!**
 - ▶ Non-compliant registrations are those that could potentially be forwarded to Code Enforcement for further action.
 - ▶ Non-compliance can be caused by:
 - ▶ Unregistered properties
 - ▶ Unpaid registration or renewal fees (expired registrations)
 - ▶ Incomplete inspections or unpaid inspection fees
- ▶ We will attempt to contact you by certified mail before referring any matter to Code Enforcement.
- ▶ Bottom-line: Communicate any changes with our staff so we can make sure all matters are addressed prior to enforcement action.

Thank you for being here today!

Presenters:

Shay Andersen – Program Administrator

Rob Barker – City Inspector

Contact us at:

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360-778-8361

City Hall

Permit Center

210 Lottie St. Bellingham, WA

