



City of Willoughby Hills, Fire Department  
Fire Safety Education

## Residential Apartment Building Fire Safety

**Fire safety begins in your own apartment!  
Are you and your family fire safe?  
Protect yourself, your family, and your neighbors.**

Thank you for taking the time to review this guide to residential apartment building fire safety. While apartment buildings are relatively safe, they present unique concerns that we feel are important to address in order to ensure the safety of you, your family, and your neighbors.



**Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors Save Lives**

## 1. KNOW YOUR EXITS

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Be familiar with the means of exit from your apartment. In the event you must evacuate, knowing the fastest ways out is crucial.

- NEVER use the elevator during a fire!
- Know the layout of your floor and the location of all exit stairwells in the event one is blocked by smoke or fire. This includes the location of fire alarm pull stations.
- Use the closest non-contaminated (not filled with smoke) stairwell.
- Know the number of doors between your apartment and the stairwell(s) in the event you are exiting in the dark.
- DO NOT go to the roof for safe haven or rescue. Harmful smoke and toxic gases may collect at the top of stairwells and rooftop access doors are typically locked.
- Have an escape plan and practice it with your family.

## 2. KEEP EXITS CLEAR AND WORKING

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Keeping exits clear and exit doors in good working order will help reduce your chances of getting trapped or injured while trying to escape a fire.

- Do not hang combustible decorations or other items on the outside of your door.
- Use locks that can be unlocked from the inside with a thumb turn rather than those requiring a key to unlock from the inside.
- DO NOT prop open stairwell doors. This will allow for smoke and fire to enter in to exit stairwells and spread to other floors making escape difficult or impossible.
- Keep stairways and stairwell landings free of obstructions and combustible materials. Do not store items (carts, strollers, bicycles, trash, etc.) in these areas.



### 3. SHOULD YOU STAY OR SHOULD YOU GO?

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#### IF THE FIRE IS IN YOUR APARTMENT:

- Get everyone out. Crawl low under smoke & heat, and once you're out, stay out!
- CLOSE (but do not lock) ALL DOORS on your way out to help contain the fire and prevent spread of smoke and toxic gases through the hallway and to other apartments.
- Alert people on your way out by activating the building fire alarm (pull stations).
- DO NOT USE THE ELEVATOR. Use the nearest non-contaminated stairwell.
- Go at least 2 floors below the fire (if applicable).
- Call 9-1-1 once you reach a safe location. Do not assume that somebody else has already reported the fire even if the fire alarm is sounding.
- Have a family meeting place and notify firefighters if anyone is unaccounted for.
- If you become trapped, call 9-1-1 and report your specific location and situation.

#### IF THE FIRE IS NOT IN YOUR APARTMENT:

If you live in a COMBUSTIBLE (WOOD-FRAME) BUILDING and there is a fire, it is usually better (safer) to leave the building immediately if able to do so. Feel the door for heat first and check the hallway for smoke and/or fire prior to exiting.

If you live in a NON-COMBUSTIBLE (HIGH RISE) BUILDING and there is a fire in the vicinity of your apartment, it is usually better (safer) to:

- Stay inside (shelter-in-place) rather than entering a smoke- and heat-filled hallway. If the fire is on the floor below your apartment, you may get caught by rising heat and smoke in the stairwells. If the fire is above your apartment, there is less danger in leaving but also less reason to leave as the (rising) smoke and heat are above you.
- Keep your door CLOSED. If smoke enters, seal off the door with wet sheets or towels and seal any ventilation (heating/AC) or other openings where smoke may enter.
- Turn off air conditioners and heating units.
- Unless flames or smoke are coming from below, open your windows or patio door a few inches. DO NOT break windows- they may need to be closed later.
- If conditions within the apartment worsen, get down on the floor and take short breaths through your nose or, if possible, retreat to a balcony away from the source of the fire.
- Call the Fire Department (9-1-1) with your apartment number and description of conditions in your apartment. If life-threatening, open a window and wave a towel or sheet to attract the attention of firefighters.

# YOUR APARTMENT FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Prevention and planning is key to protecting your family and neighbors. Use this checklist as a guide to identify possible fire safety problems in your apartment building. If you check NO to any question, the potential hazard should be corrected to reduce your risk and increase your preparedness for fire.

## YES NO

- 1- Do you have at least one operable smoke alarm?
- 2- Do you have at least one operable carbon monoxide alarm?
- 3- Are all electrical cords in good condition? (Not frayed or cracked.)
- 4- Are all electrical cords in the open, not under rugs or through doorways?
- 5- Is your apartment free from storage of flammables, i.e. gasoline, propane?
- 6- Are space heaters placed at least three feet from combustibles?
- 7- Are space heaters plugged in directly to outlets and not extension cords?
- 8- Is your apartment door free of combustible decorations or other items?
- 9- Can all windows be opened easily from the inside?
- 10- Are building stairwells free of storage and rubbish?
- 11- Are stairwell fire doors kept closed and free of obstructions?
- 12- Are exit signs and emergency lights in good working order?
- 13- Do you have operable flashlights handy?
- 14- Do you have a fire escape plan and do you practice it?
- 15- Do you have emergency numbers posted near the telephone?

**Immediately correct problems or hazards that are within your control or responsibility. Notify building management of any others that are not. If necessary, you may file a complaint by calling the fire department at 440-942-7207 or 440-942-1111.**

## ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS

### GENERAL

- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms weekly and replace batteries every 6 months or when you change your clocks.
- Cook with care. Don't wear loose clothing or leave cooking unattended on stove. Have a fire extinguisher on hand or baking soda to smother a stove fire.
- Extinguish all flames before leaving your apartment- candles, burners, ovens, etc.
- Never smoke in bed and make sure there are no smoldering butts in your ashtrays.
- Don't put items in the trash chute that are too large and might get stuck. This could lead to fire spread from lower floors.

### MEDICAL OXYGEN

- Do not smoke when using oxygen or in an apartment where oxygen is in use.
- Candles, matches, and even sparking toys can be ignition sources and should not be used in an apartment where medical oxygen is in use.
- Keep oxygen cylinders at least 5ft from heat sources, open flames, or electrical devices.
- Body oil, hand lotion, and items containing oil and grease (including aerosol sprays) can easily ignite and should be kept away when oxygen is in use.
- Post "NO SMOKING" and "NO OPEN FLAMES" signs in and outside the home to remind people not to smoke.

### PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Provide input on the best methods for escape when planning and practicing fire drills.
- Discuss what assistance may be needed with family and neighbors.
- Know the location of areas of refuge and arrange for assistance in case of emergency.
- Keep a phone or phone with TDD (for the deaf) in the bedroom within reach of the bed.
- Alert device accessories for smoke alarms (strobes, bed shakers) are available to alert those who are deaf to fire conditions.

#### **1503.04 PROHIBITION OF FIRES IN MULTIPLE DWELLINGS.**

No person, tenant or leaseholder shall kindle or maintain a fire to be used for the preparation of food, or for any other purpose, in any type of outdoor or portable grill in any apartment or on or below any apartment house balcony, or within twenty feet of any structure housing more than two families.

(Ord. 1975-38. Passed 7-24-75.)<sup>1</sup>

**Willoughby Hills Fire Code**

# WILLOUGHBY HILLS FIRE DEPARTMENT



Established in 1947, the Willoughby Hills Fire Department proudly provides professional Fire & Rescue services to the City of Willoughby Hills as well as the Village of Waite Hill. We also participate in automatic and mutual aid agreements with all of our neighboring communities including membership in regional special teams providing technical rescue, hazardous materials, and fire investigation responses.

We are a combination-type department consisting of 10 career members and approximately 30 part-time members all cross-trained to provide both Fire and EMS services. If we can ever be of assistance to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Fire Station: 440-942-7207 \* Administration: 440-918-8711 \* Fax: 440-975-3534

**EMERGENCY 9-1-1 / 440-942-1111**

Emergency Services	Non-Emergency Services
Fire suppression & investigation	Smoke/Carbon monoxide detector checks
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	Blood pressure checks
Auto accidents / Extrication	Home fire safety surveys
Hazardous materials response	Fire code enforcement
Technical Rescue (rope, water, river, ice)	Fire hydrant maintenance
Smoke/Odor investigations	Public assistance (flood, storm, life assists)
Utility emergencies (gas leaks, down wires)	Community education/relations programs
Carbon monoxide investigations	<b>FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:</b>

@WHFireRescue

