

Fire Safety Checklist for Large Family Child Care Homes

Alameda County

November 2008

A Fire Clearance is required by State Community Care Licensing (CCL) for large family child care homes. The purpose of an inspection is to ensure that the home is free of fire and safety hazards and has proper and sufficient fire prevention devices/equipment, evacuation plans and escape routes. The following checklist,¹ developed in cooperation with the Alameda County Fire Prevention Officers, is designed to help large family child care providers prepare for their Fire Clearance inspections. However, providers should contact Planning Departments for relevant permitting information before a Fire Clearance is pursued. We hope that this document will serve as a user-friendly guide for navigating the Fire Clearance process. While this checklist offers general fire safety guidelines, your local Fire Department may require additional safety measures before issuing your fire clearance.

Important

- **Your local Fire Department may require additional safety measures not included in this checklist. Call your local Fire Department for more information.**
- This checklist only contains requirements included within the California State Building and Fire Code. You must first contact your local Planning/Zoning Department to determine what additional requirements your home will have to meet in order to obtain a Use Permit in your city.
- You may also need to contact your city's Finance Department to obtain a Business License. In some cities your annual Fire Inspection is triggered through the renewal of your Business License.
- Garages cannot be used for child care unless the garage has been converted with permits to code for residential use, and has also been approved by the Planning Department.
- Your entire home and grounds will be inspected, including detached structures.
- All Licensees must be present during the licensing required Fire Clearance inspection.
- **These are minimal restrictions. Check with your local Fire Department.***

¹ This checklist includes common elements from Fire Clearance Checklists for R-3 occupancies provided by the Cities of Alameda, Fremont, San Leandro, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo, Dublin, Union City, Emeryville, Albany, Livermore, Newark, Pleasanton, Oakland and Alameda County. All information is current as of November, 2008 and was gathered during meetings with Fire Prevention Officers and child care providers by the Alameda County LINCC (Local Investment in Child Care Project, 510-208-9578) and Community Care Licensing. Community Care Licensing may be contacted for more information at 510-622-2602.

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How do I schedule my Fire Inspection?

Before scheduling your Fire Clearance inspection your application for a license must be on file with Community Care Licensing. CCL sends form STD 850 to the fire department after you submit your application. Then you should contact the Fire Department in your city. Your local Fire Department should be expecting your call due to Community Care Licensing's notification.

How long will it take to have a fire clearance inspection?

Please contact your local fire department.

What will my total costs be?

Please contact your local fire department.

What will the Fire Inspector be looking for?

Fire Alarms/Protection

1. Install residential-type smoke detectors. Smoke detectors should be located on every level of your home, in any room designated as a "sleeping room" as well as common areas, including hallways. "Sleeping rooms" include any room which you may use for children's nap time even if this room is a family bedroom. Before your inspection, call your local Fire Department, and they can help you to determine the correct locations to install these devices in your home. When installing your smoke detectors be sure to carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.
2. Mount a fire extinguisher so that the top is no higher than 4 feet above the floor. This extinguisher should have a rating of "2A10BC" or better labeled on the device and must have a current state fire marshal tag. The fire extinguisher shall be mounted by an exit.
3. Install a "fire alarm signal." This device should be audible throughout the house. You should not have to press or manipulate the device continually for it to sound. It should be separate from other alarm systems, such as your home security system. **Different jurisdictions maintain different policies regarding the characteristics of this system,*** ranging from full pull stations to Personal Alarm Devices. Check with your local Fire Department for the specific policy of your city.

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Exits

4. There must be two exits on every floor of your home that lead outside if child care is provided on that floor. If you operate your child care business in the basement, one exit must lead directly outside without going up stairs to the first floor. A garage door is not considered a separate exit.*
5. All exits must have a clear open space of at least 32 inches wide and 80 inches tall. A 36 inch door frame or larger will accommodate this requirement. A sliding glass door can serve as one of these exits. Only one exit may pass through the kitchen. No furniture, cribs, or other objects should block these doorways at anytime.
6. You must be able to open all exit doors from the inside without a key or “special knowledge or effort.” This means that even a small child should be able to open the door without an adult. If your exit door has a lock and a latch, it must be a single action lever type.
7. All rooms providing child care must have a window that can be opened and used to escape in the event of a fire. This window must be a clear opening of a minimum 20 inches wide by a minimum 24 inches high for a total of 5.7 square feet, and no higher than 44 inches from the floor. If security bars cover your windows, they must be equipped with a quick release single motion device to allow for easy access or must be removed.*
8. Your home must be within 150 feet of a public road and have access to this road. The road must be an all weather road of at least 20 feet in width.

Overall Safety Guidelines

9. Your home shall maintain fire resistive construction between your garage and your living areas.
10. Children should not be able to have access to water heaters, furnaces, or electrical panels.
11. Above-ground pools or spas must be covered or fenced and meet the California Building Code.
12. All hazardous materials must be stored secured away from children.
13. Keep brush and landscaping around your home neat and orderly.
14. All storage areas, including closets, should be neat and orderly.
15. Post your address so that it is visible from the street during the day and night. Your sign address should appear in at least a 6 inch lettering upon a contrasting background. An external light source may also be helpful to increase visibility from the roadway.
16. Electrical wiring and systems should be in good condition. Extension cords and multi-plug adapters shall not be used in lieu of permanent wiring. Make sure that your main electrical panel is easy to open, that all breakers are properly labeled.
17. Post an emergency evacuation plan at exits and conduct regular fire drills with your children. Record these drills for future inspections with the date, time, and

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which exit you used for the drill. Educate yourself on ways to turn off your utilities: electrical, gas, and water meters, in case of a disaster.

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