
CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS FIRE DEPARTMENT



PROPERTY MAINTENANCE INSPECTION POLICY

EFFECTIVE July 1, 2005

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to guide the administration of all property maintenance, licensing and inspections.

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the City of Columbia Heights to conduct property maintenance licensing and inspections according to the procedures outlined in this document, City Ordinances, State Fire Code and the State Building Code.

SCOPE

The provisions of this policy shall apply to all existing residential and nonresidential structures and all existing premises and constitute minimum requirements and standards for premises, structures, equipment and facilities for light, ventilation, space, heating, sanitation, protection from the elements, life safety, safety from fire and other hazards, and for safe and sanitary maintenance; the responsibility of owners, operators and occupants; the occupancy of existing structures and premises, and for administration, enforcement and penalties.

PROCEDURE

Inspection Hours. Hours for conducting non-scheduled inspections shall be Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 4:45 pm. Inspections may be performed outside this time frame if needed. Scheduled inspections shall be Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am-11:00 am and 1:30 pm-4:00 pm.

Property Identification. All properties will be assigned an occupancy identification number. The specific occupancy type of the property/space will determine the occupancy ID number. See the chart below for numbering system.

OCCUPANCY ID NUMBER RANGE	TYPE OF OCCUPANCY
10000 – 10999	Single Family Rental
12000 – 12999	Owner Occupied Two Family Dwelling
20000 – 29999	Two Family Rental
30000 – 34999	Multi Family (3 or more units) Rental
35000 – 35999	Owner Occupied Condominiums
40000 – 49999	Commercial Property
50000 – 59999	Industrial Property
60000 – 69999	Churches and School Property
70000 – 79999	City Owned Property
80000 – 89999	Vacant Property
90000 – 99999	Owner Occupied Single Family Homes

LICENSING

All property, except Owner Occupied Single Family Homes, shall be licensed. Licenses are not transferable. Non-residential properties with multiple tenant spaces shall have a license for each individual tenant space. New property owners or non-residential tenants must submit a new application within 30 days. Any change in occupancy classification shall be approved prior to occupation of the space or property.

Licensing procedure is as follows:

Residential Rental Property. Every property will be given a licensing date. The date is always the 1st day of a month. The license will run for one year from that date thru the last day of the 12th month.

License applications will be sent out to the owner 45 days prior to their licensing date. Licensing requires that a signed, updated application be returned along with required fees prior to the re-licensing date.

All applications shall be filled out completely and signed, to be considered as meeting the licensing requirement. Any incomplete application will be sent back.

A reminder letter will be sent out 15 days prior to the re-licensing date reminding the owner to return their application and fees.

On the first of the month, the re-licensing date, all properties that have not submitted their application and fees will be placed on the agenda of a City Council meeting for revocation of license.

Non-Residential Properties. Every property will be given a licensing date. The date is always the 1st day of a month. The license will run for one year from that date thru the last day of the 12th month.

License applications will be sent out to the owner/tenant 45 days prior to their licensing date. Licensing requires that a signed, updated application be returned along with required fees prior to the re-licensing date.

All applications shall be filled out completely and signed, to be considered as meeting the licensing requirement. Any incomplete application will be sent back.

A reminder letter will be sent out 15 days prior to the re-licensing date reminding the owner to return their application and fees.

On the first of the month, the re-licensing date, all properties that have not submitted a completed license application and fees will be placed on the agenda of a City Council meeting for revocation of license.

**PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE
LICENSING PROCEDURE
TABLE FORM**

RESIDENTIAL WITH INTERIOR INSPECTION	RESIDENTIAL WITHOUT INTERIOR INSPECTION	NON-RESIDENTIAL
45 days prior to license date, license application and inspection request are mailed out.	45 days prior to license date, license application and inspection request are mailed out.	45 days prior to license date, license application and inspection request are mailed out.
After 30 days, if license application, fees, and initial inspection are not in, a reminder letter is sent.	After 15 days if no inspection appointment is requested the address is given to inspectors.	After 15 days if no inspection appointment is requested the address is given to inspectors.
After 45 days, all 3 items: license application, fees, and initial inspection must be in and completed. If one or all are not done the property is scheduled for a revocation hearing.	After 30 days, if license application and fees are not in, a reminder letter is sent.	After 30 days, if license application and fees are not in, a reminder letter is sent.
	After 45 days, if the license application and fees are not in the property is scheduled for a revocation hearing.	After 45 days, if the license application and fees are not in and an inspection could not be made, the property is scheduled for a revocation hearing.

LICENSE FEES

All licensed properties will be assessed a license fee. The fee will cover the length of time of the license only. As with the license, the license fee is not transferable. The license fee may be prorated for a specific length of time for the remainder of a licensing year. Proposed licensing fees are as follows:

RESIDENTIAL

See attached fee schedule for current fees. Fees are set by Resolution.

NON-RESIDENTIAL

See attached fee schedule for current fees. Fees are set by Resolution.

INSPECTIONS

All licensed properties are required to have periodic inspections as per this chart:

Occupancy ID Number	Interior Required	Exterior Required
10000 – 35999	Every other year	Every year
40000 – 89999	Every year	Every year
90000 – 99999	None	By complaint*

*The Fire department has the right to make systematic inspections of properties as individuals, blocks, or areas of the City.

45 days prior to their re-licensing date, along with the license application, the owner/commercial tenant will be requested to schedule an inspection if required.

Residential rental properties that require inspections of the individual tenant units are required to schedule an inspection with the Fire Department. Tenants shall be notified, by the owner, of the inspection at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled inspection. The Fire Department will not inspect individual units that have not met the minimum 24 hours notice. It is the right of the tenant to refuse to let us conduct an inspection of their individual tenant space. The Fire Department may acquire an administrative search warrant to conduct the inspection. The Fire Department reserves the right to inspect a randomly picked sampling of units based on the size of the building and past inspection history.

The occupancy identification number will be used to determine the year in which residential rental properties receive inspections of the individual rental units. Properties, which have an even occupancy ID number, will have unit inspections during even numbered years. Properties, which have an odd occupancy ID number, will have unit inspections during odd numbered years. Rental property owners desiring to change the year of inspection for a property may do so **one time** by contacting the fire department Inspection office.

All licensed residential properties are required to have an inspection of the exterior and common areas every year.

Non-residential properties/tenant spaces are required to have interior and exterior inspections every year. This will include the annual fire inspection as mandated by the State Fire Code.

Residential rental properties that do not require inspections of the individual units, and all other properties, will have the opportunity to schedule an inspection until 30 days prior to their re-licensing date. After this date the inspections will be made during regular inspection hours without prior notice. Properties/tenants that are not open during regular business hours are required to set up an appointment for their inspection.

The initial inspection must be made prior to the property's re-licensing date for all properties. On the first of the month, the re-licensing date, all properties that have not had their initial inspection will be placed on the agenda of the next City Council meeting for revocation of license

COMPLAINT INSPECTION. The Fire Department shall respond to all complaints. Complaints will be accepted either verbally or in writing. A written record of the complaint will be made.

Complainants are encouraged to identify themselves however it is not required. Information regarding the identity of any complainant is private data and will not be released to public.

Complaints will be included as a scheduled inspection unless it is determined that it is a Priority Inspection. Priority Inspections will be responded to as soon as feasible.

Complaints of individual residential rental units will follow the above policy with some differences. Complaints must originate from a tenant of the unit. Except for Priority Violations, complaint inspections will not be made for tenants that are under an unlawful detainer, part of an eviction process, or who have already moved out of a property.

If a complaint is in regards to the exterior of a property the inspectors may, based on the type of violations and the condition of neighboring properties, inspect those neighboring properties that have similar violations or are of similar condition.

Violation Correction

When violations are found by inspectors, the owner of residential properties or the owner/tenant of non-residential properties shall be given reasonable time to correct the violations. Following is the schedule to be used by the Property Maintenance office:

TYPE OF VIOLATION	TIME TO FIRST REINSPECTION	DISPOSITION
Priority Violations (Significant life safety violations). Trash, Outside Storage, Vegetation, etc.	10 days*	Citation, Abatement or License Revocation**
All Other Violations	30 days*	Citation, Abatement or License Revocation**
<p>*These time frames are used unless a different time is specified in the ordinance or referenced ordinance.</p> <p>**License revocation does not apply to non-licensed properties, i.e. owner occupied single-family homes.</p>		

The property owner or commercial tenant will be mailed a violation notice. The notice will contain the date of the inspection, any violations found, and the date/time of the re-inspection. The notice will also contain the process/penalties if the violations are not corrected by the re-inspection date.

If violations are not corrected, the property may be put on the agenda of a City Council meeting for a possible license revocation hearing or abatement hearing.

EXTENSION PROCEDURE

Extensions to the violation correction schedule above may be granted by the inspection staff, office staff or the Property Maintenance Enforcement Officer subject to the following guidelines.

Extensions will only be granted if requested during the initial 30-day time to the first re-inspection. Extensions will not be granted for 10-day violations.

Requests for extensions received for non–priority violations can be granted routinely by inspection staff or office staff for up to a maximum of 14 days. Any length of time longer than this requires the approval of the Property Maintenance Enforcement Officer.

Seasonal extensions for exterior work, which cannot be completed due to cold weather, may be granted to no later than June 1 of the following year. Examples include exterior painting, siding replacement, roofing, concrete, or asphalt work, retaining walls, landscaping or other work with soil that is frozen.

Special extensions may be granted for large projects that require more time or are a financial hardship. Requests for these extensions are to be in writing with an explanation as to the hardship. The request must include a completion date. Only one special extension will be granted for a violation.

Extensions involving heating violations require the approval of the Property Maintenance Officer. Generally, the property owner will be granted reasonable extensions provided that significant efforts are being made by the property owner to comply and circumstances beyond the control of the property owner exist.

A re-inspection of extension items will be made to verify compliance. If the violation is not completed the property may be given a citation or the property will be put on the agenda of a City Council meeting for a license revocation hearing or abatement hearing.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

There may be times that deadlines cannot be made due to special situations beyond the control of the City and its staff. An example may be a missed inspection due to an emergency call. The inspection office has the right to deviate from this policy as long as the intent of the policy is met.

REVOCATION PROCESS

When the property has not met the above requirements, licensed properties may have their license revoked. The license can only be revoked by the City Council as part of a revocation hearing. Property owners and tenants are to be notified of the revocation hearing by regular and certified mail. The owner's notification will also include the **Statement of Cause**.

The revocation hearing will be set by staff with the City Council Secretary. Staff will schedule the hearing to give the owner and tenants at least 14 days notice.

A final pre-revocation inspection will be performed, if needed, prior to the hearing. If violations are corrected and all other requirements are met, the hearing will be closed.

At the revocation hearing, the owner and all tenants will be given an opportunity to be heard by the City Council.

The City Council has the right to revoke or suspend the license, grant an extension, table the motion, or refuse revocation.

If the license is revoked, the owner and tenants will be notified by regular and certified mail of the revocation. The property will also be posted. The posting gives 60 days to vacate.

Sixty days after the original posting of the property, an **Unlawful to Occupy** posting will be put on the building. The Fire Department may write the owner and/or occupants a County Citation or begin the process with Anoka County Courts to have the occupants removed.

To re-license a revoked property, all requirements of this policy and the Property Maintenance Code ordinance shall be met. This includes all outstanding fees.

ABATEMENT PROCEDURE

City ordinance #1461 allows for the abatement of Property Maintenance violations that the City Council deems a nuisance affecting public safety. The Property Maintenance Office will follow the procedures outlined in the ordinance.

The violation letter sent to property owners/tenants will advise that abatement may be one of the options used if the violations are not completed by the re-inspection date.

If the violations are not completed by the re-inspection date, and the Property Maintenance Office decides to use this option, the property owner/tenant will be scheduled for an abatement hearing at a City Council Meeting.

COUNTY CITATION

The Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief are allowed, by City ordinance, to write County Citations. The Property Maintenance Office will follow the procedures outlined in the ordinance.

The violation letter sent to property owners/tenants will advise that a County Citation may be one of the options used if the violations are not completed by the re-inspection date.

If the violations are not completed by the re-inspection date, and the Property Maintenance Office decides to use this option, the property owner/tenant will be given a County Citation.

