



Department of Public Safety

Division of Fire Safety

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DATE: February 27, 2024
FROM: Michael Desrochers, Executive Director, Division of Fire Safety
TO: Whom it May Concern
SUBJECT: Short Term Rentals

The Division of Fire Safety is acutely aware of the many ongoing debates surrounding the pros and cons of short-term rentals. The Division’s statutory authority to regulate the construction and maintenance of public buildings is found in 20 V.S.A. Chapter 173 (Prevention and Investigation of Fires). Short-term rentals are under the jurisdiction of the Division of Fire Safety.

Throughout the past several years the legislature has focused primarily on educating the short-term rental operators by passing legislation identifying the financial, safety, health, and sanitation obligations a short-term rental operator must comply with. The financial, safety, health, and sanitation considerations emphasize “general guidelines” for those structures housing 1-8 guests.

Occupancy Classifications

- **Single Family Home 1-8 guests (1&2 Family Dwelling under the Life Safety Code)**
- **Single Family Home 9-16 guests (Rooming and Lodging Facility under the Life Safety Code)**
- **Above 16 guests Hotel/Motel**

The Division of Fire Safety in our 2015 rule making process provided specific language pertaining to **Rooming and Lodging Establishments**. Renting accommodation for 9 to 16 guests in the same building whether long term or short term is a **Rooming and Lodging Facility** under the Life Safety Code. Changing a structure/dwelling into a Rooming and Lodging Facility is a **Change of Occupancy** and **Change of Use** constituting permits and electrical and plumbing work notices. Rooming and Lodging Facilities have inherent added risk compared to a 1&2 Family Dwelling for example, increased number of occupants, alarm system requirements, more restrictive exiting, residential sprinkler system requirement for new rooming and lodging facilities to name a few subtle differences. Often Rooming and Lodging facilities are housed in larger buildings where occupants cannot easily familiarize themselves with exits and their surrounding versus in a single-family short term rental environment, occupants know each other, and it is much easier to adapt to the environment.

With limited resources we focus more attention on Rooming and Lodging facilities because of the heightened risk and permit requirements. We have always responded to legitimate complaints alleging unsafe and unhealthy living conditions in all public buildings we regulate. To learn more about fire safety I encourage you to visit our web page which we continue to update. You can visit our site at <https://firesafety.vermont.gov/>

