



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:
Chuck Finnie
(510) 583-4344
chuck.finnie@hayward-ca.gov

City of Hayward announces review of fire-safety inspection practices

HAYWARD, Calif., May 18, 2018—The City of Hayward announced today it is reviewing its fire-safety inspection practices in light of state law requiring that all multifamily apartment buildings receive annual fire department inspections for fire and other safety hazards.

The city’s practice for more than a decade has been for the Hayward Fire Department Office of the Fire Marshal to inspect apartment buildings at least large enough to have on-site management that can provide access to the property and individual units. In practice, that has meant buildings with 20 or more residential units.

Smaller residential rental properties not visited by city Fire Marshal personnel are inspected by the Code Enforcement Division of the Hayward Development Services Department pursuant to a 1989 city ordinance requiring inspection of all rental housing in the city.

The 1989 Hayward Residential Rental Inspection Ordinance doesn’t require annual inspections—only that they occur over time. Inspections carried out pursuant to the local law cover a broad checklist of interior and exterior building code items, including fire- and life-safety issues such as smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors and electrical fixtures and components.

“Our approach has been a practical one that prioritizes the health and safety of residents while taking into account resource limitations and other policy goals,” said City Manager Kelly McAdoo, announcing the review.

“In light of state law and recent fire tragedies here in Alameda County, we are reviewing our practices and evaluating additional tools and resources that can be brought to bear to ensure we are doing all that we can to keep our residents safe in their homes without creating unduly burdensome regulatory structures,” McAdoo added.

In Hayward, there are more than 7,000 residential rental properties containing more than 23,000 dwelling units.

The California Health and Safety Code has long required annual fire department inspections of apartment houses with three or more units—but not annual reporting to monitor compliance.

In 2011, the Office of the State Fire Marshal issued an advisory clarifying local fire department inspection authority and responsibilities—including the ability to charge fees to property owners to cover the costs.

Annual inspections by Fire Marshal and Code Enforcement personnel are not the only means by which apartment buildings come to be evaluated for fire and other safety hazards. Resident and other public complaints to code enforcement personnel, the Fire Marshal and other city agencies generate inspections and enforcement.

Hayward firefighter paramedics answering medical emergency calls also identify and report fire-safety violations when they encounter them.

Hayward firefighters assigned to firehouses conduct pre-fire planning in which they familiarize themselves with buildings in their areas of responsibility and how they would attack a fire in these structures. As part of this process, firefighters gain access to buildings and, while doing so, identify and require correction of fire and other hazards.

Newly constructed apartment buildings must pass a battery of inspections prior to certification for occupancy.