

Rental Housing Registration and Inspection Program

October 1, 2012

Summary of Program Elements

Registration

- Registration required for all rental housing units, from single family houses to large apartments; exceptions include
 - Short-term vacation rentals
 - Commercial lodging such as hotels, motels and B&Bs
 - Housing units in state licensed facilities like assisted living, adult family homes or veterans homes
 - Hospitals and hospices
 - Emergency or temporary shelters or transitional housing
 - Facilities owned by or managed for Major Institutions
 - Housing units in a religious facility occupied by members of the religious order
 - Housing units, owned by a government entity or housing authority, like SHA
- Inspections apply to all registered rental housing units, except those receiving public subsidies that are already subject to regular inspections, those getting regular inspections from their lending institution, and accessory dwelling units if occupied by an immediate family member of the resident home owner
- The following schedule applies for the registration requirement:
 - By July 1, 2014, all properties with 10 or more rental housing units
 - By December 31, 2014, all properties with 5 to 9 rental housing units
 - By December 31, 2016, all properties with 1 to 4 rental housing units
- Each registration must include a sworn statement that the rental housing units meet specified subset of the health and safety standards called for in Seattle's housing code
- Registrations must be renewed every five years

Inspections

- All registered properties will be inspected within the first ten years of the program
- Rental properties subject to this program that have had two or more Notices of Violation or one or more Emergency Orders issued within a two year period will be inspected within the first year of the program
- Five years after its first required inspection, properties are subject to re-inspection.

- Inspections may be completed by a private-sector Qualified Rental Housing Inspector. A certificate of compliance from the inspector indicating that the property has been inspected and is in compliance with the specified standards will be required.
- In multi-unit properties with 20 or fewer units, two units must be inspected when subject to the random inspection process. In properties with more than 20 units, 15 percent of the units will be inspected up to a maximum of 50.
- Private sector Qualified Rental Housing Inspectors will need to meet certification requirements and attend training established by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD).
- DPD will selectively audit the work of the private sector Qualified Rental Housing Inspectors

Other elements

- Penalties for failing to comply with the program are established
- Beginning in 2014, DPD will report to Council every year on a variety of program elements including both the registration and inspection process, if fees for the program match program costs and code enforcement actions resulting from the inspections
- After the initial 10 year inspection period has been completed, Council will evaluate the inspection component of this program to determine if alternative approaches are warranted
- An extensive outreach and education program will be conducted in 2013-14, prior to the effective date of the registration requirement.
- The current complaint-based process for housing code violations will continue, using City Housing and Zoning Inspectors who will enforce all housing code standards and any other applicable codes

Please review the draft ordinance (see version 12) for details of the program:
<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Compliance/RentalHousing/Overview/default.asp>