



SAN MATEO CONSOLIDATED FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Prevention & Life Safety

2121 S. El Camino Real, Bldg B, Ste 100, San Mateo, CA 94403

650-522-7940 · prevention@smcfire.ca.gov · www.smcfire.ca.gov

TO: Owners, Property Managers, and Homeowners Association Boards of Multi-Residential Properties in Belmont, Foster City, and San Mateo

RE: Holiday Fire and Life Safety Information

The San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department is committed to partnering with the owners and managers of multi-residential properties in Belmont, Foster City, and San Mateo to protect the residents in your care. This letter is informational. It is not a notice of violation, and no inspection or response is required.

The holidays bring more open flame, more electrical load, and more people into your residents' homes than at any other time of year. Nationally, decorations other than trees start an average of 835 home fires each year, causing 3 deaths, 29 injuries, and \$18 million in property damage (NFPA Research). Nearly all of them are preventable, yet residents are rarely told what to do differently before the season starts.

Enclosed is a Holiday Fire and Life Safety Guide written for apartment and condominium residents. It covers trees, lights, and decorations; candles, menorahs, and open flame; holiday cooking; extension cords and lithium-ion charging; and guests, exits, and deliveries.

This letter asks two things of you: put the enclosed guide in front of your residents before the season begins, and confirm that the building conditions it depends on are in place.

How to Distribute the Enclosed Guide

The guide is written to stand alone. It may be reproduced freely and requires no permission from this department. It is most effective in early November, before trees, lights, and holiday cooking arrive.

- Send it through your resident newsletter, resident portal, or association email distribution.
- Post it in lobbies, mail rooms, laundry rooms, and community rooms.
- Include it with your November resident mailing.
- Review it at your next association or resident meeting.

Please Confirm These Building Conditions

The resident actions in the enclosed guide depend on conditions that are the responsibility of ownership and management. Please verify the following before the season begins:

- 1. Corridor and stairwell doors.** Self-closing and latching, with no wreaths, decorations, or wedges that keep them from closing.
- 2. Exit paths and stairwells.** Clear of packages, boxes, and decorations. Deliveries pile up during the holidays.
- 3. Live trees.** Residents know where and when trees must go. A dried tree left in a corridor, stairwell, trash room, or on a balcony is a serious hazard.
- 4. Open flame and cooking rules.** Residents know your building's rules on candles, balcony grills, and turkey fryers.
- 5. Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.** Present, operable, and within service life in every unit. The guide asks residents to test them before guests arrive.

6. Portable fire extinguishers. Serviced within the past 12 months, unobstructed, and clearly marked.

7. Evacuation information. Floor diagrams posted, and residents told whether to evacuate or shelter in place.

No Cost Support Available

Our office will review your building's evacuation plan or answer code questions at no charge.

Questions

Contact Fire Prevention & Life Safety at 650-522-7940 or prevention@smcfire.ca.gov. If your property has conditions this letter does not address, or you are unsure whether a specific practice is permitted in your building, please call us.

If you are not the person responsible for day-to-day management of this property, please forward this letter to your property manager and contact our Fire Prevention Division at 650-522-7940 or prevention@smcfire.ca.gov to update the contact information we have on file.

We appreciate your partnership in keeping your residents safe this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Carisa Workman

Carisa Workman

Fire Marshal

San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department

Enclosure: Holiday Fire and Life Safety Guide for Apartments and Condominiums