

WHAT'S THE SAFETY SCORE OF YOUR BUILDING? BASIC SECURITY ELEMENTS FOR RENTAL PROPERTIES and FIRE SAFETY TIPS

When you are trying to evaluate the safety of a place you are planning to rent or a place in which you are currently living, you should take the following elements into consideration:

1. OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Is the street well-lit?

Does your property have lights ___ in front, ___ on the side, ___ in the back?

Are the lights in working order?

2. LANDSCAPING

Are shrubs trimmed low enough not to obstruct view?

3. EXTERIOR DOOR SYSTEM

Is the exterior door solid core or metal?

Is the door support frame tight-fitting?

Is there a solid deadbolt lock on the front door?

Is the front door self-closing and self-locking?

Are hinges mounted on the interior side?

Is there a viewing device that gives you 180 degrees viewing of the entrance area?

4. WINDOWS

Are all windowpanes intact?

Do all windows have interior locks? Do all locks work properly?

Are all the windows accessible from the ground protected, such that they prevent entry, yet allow quick exit in case of fire?

If bars are installed, are they fastened to the masonry?

Do you have at least one window per room which can be opened from inside by using a quick release device, in case of fire?

5. INTERCOM BUZZER SYSTEM

Is your intercom buzzer system working properly?

6. FIRE SAFETY

Is the building's fire alarm system and emergency/standby electrical system up to date? (Ask for a copy of the latest certification)

Are there fire exits and appropriate signage?

Are all fire exits protected to prevent unauthorized entry, yet allow exit?

Are there functioning smoke detectors in your building/apartment?

Are there fire extinguishers in your building/apartment?

7. INTERIOR SAFETY

Is the door to your apartment secure, solid and tight in its frame?

Do you have a good working lock?

Is there a peephole viewer on your doors?

Are the hallways well-lit?

Are all the electric bulbs working?

Are there mirrors at bends, to prevent someone waiting unseen?

Are mailboxes appropriately placed to prevent tampering by outsiders?

8. RENTSAFE PRACTICES

Is the property properly licensed? (Ask for a written statement certifying that the property is licensed and listing the license number)

Does the company you rent from practice an effective key control system? (How are keys duplicated and handled?)

Does your property owner/manager effectively perform background checks for **ALL** employees that have access to your apartment?

Are apartment doors re-keyed between tenancies?

Are you notified of landlord/agent/maintenance person's intent to enter premises?

Does your property owner/manager routinely check and maintain all security features of the property?

Do you know your neighbors and communicate with them?

High "yes" answers indicate that the building you live in and the company you rent from have high safety scores and the opportunity for burglary is significantly reduced. High "no" answers indicate a low safety score and you will need to contact your landlord about it. Always address your concerns in writing. If the landlord does not respond to your safety concerns you should contact the Crime Prevention Officer of the Police District in your area.

IMPORTANT SAFETY AUDIT AND FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION ON THE BACK 

FIRE SAFETY TIPS

TO REPORT A FIRE OFF-CAMPUS, CALL 911

Living off campus means being more responsible for your own safety and the safety of those around you. Fire safety is one of the most important responsibilities you will assume. Be aware of the fire safety laws and evacuation procedures. Make sure you know what your responsibilities are as a tenant, and what your landlord must do regarding fire protection. Rooming houses have additional fire safety requirements and you should make sure the rooming house is in compliance with the fire code requirements.

Required Fire Protection Devices

The Fire Code (Title 5) requires that *smoke detectors* (certified by a nationally recognized fire testing laboratory) must be installed in all common areas, including basements, in combination with other required alarm systems. They must also be installed outside each sleeping area. It is the landlord's responsibility to install these devices, but the tenant must make sure that the devices are in place, and that they are tested monthly. Make sure you know how to replace the batteries in your smoke detectors! A smoke detector's early warning can provide you with the extra time essential to a successful escape.

Fire Prevention

- If you smell gas, immediately **call the gas company**, and then notify your landlord. Open windows and doors to prevent gas buildup while you wait for help to come.
- Use a power strip with surge protection. Do not overload electrical outlets.
- Never leave food unattended while cooking.
- Make sure to extinguish candles before you leave your house or go to bed.
- The use of halogen lamps can be dangerous. Do not use them, or use them with great care.
- **Do not barbecue on decks and roofs.** This is a fire code violation in multi-unit buildings.
- Portable heaters can be dangerous if used improperly. Read instructions carefully and keep combustible materials at a distance of at least 36 inches from the heater. Remember that kerosene heaters are illegal in any multi-unit dwelling.

Evacuation

- Devise a fire drill with your roommates identifying two clear paths of escape from each room and a pre-designated area to meet in case of an emergency.
- If you smell smoke or discover a fire, activate the building alarm. Know where your fire alarms are located and how they operate and whether or not they actually alert the Fire Department.
- If you hear an alarm, **leave at once** - do not delay. And close all doors behind you! Call 911. Say "I want to report a fire" and give a complete name and address.
- Avoid elevators. Use the stairs.
- Feel all doors before opening. If a door feels hot, or if smoke is seeping out, **DO NOT OPEN IT.**
- If you become trapped in your apartment and cannot reach a fire exit, do not panic. Close your door and seal off any cracks with wet towels. If you can, call the Fire Department, give them your name, address and location in the building. Open a window for air and signal for help. Do not jump! **WAIT** for help.
- If you find yourself in smoke or heat, stay low, where the air is better. Take short, quick breaths through the nose until you reach safety.

For more information contact
the University of Pennsylvania
Fire and Emergency Services,
215-573-7857.