

Residential Property Standards Guidelines for Service Providers / Support Staff



ST. JOHN'S
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, CANADA

Inspection Services Division Mandate

- The inspection services division is responsible for the processing of applications for permits with respect to all components of construction for new and existing residential and commercial properties.
- The division is also responsible for ensuring the safe use of properties and the sustainability of the built environment through enforcement of maintenance standards and by-laws. This is achieved through the timely response to complaints of possible infractions thus maintaining a safe, clean and viable city.

Enforcement

- The City's Inspection Services Division has a team of 30 inspectors of property, electrical and plumbing specialties which enforce some 16 by-laws as well as National Building, Electrical, Plumbing and Fire codes.
- The City of St. John's Inspection Services Division also works closely with government and community sector agencies, such as Eastern Health and the Provinces Department of Advanced Education and Skills to ensure adequate housing is provided. In some circumstances when closure of the dwelling unit is necessary, adequate alternate accommodations are provided for through communication with these agencies.

Safe and Healthy Housing

“You Have a Roll to Play”

- The City recognizes that many tenants living in such properties are reluctant to report violations fearing they may lose their housing. Faced with the choice between inadequate housing and no housing, there is a growing concern that many tenants choose to endure these conditions.
- A collaborating approach that engages the city and community sector agencies in addressing inadequate housing will help in ensuring a safe, clean and viable city.



- The City of St. John's is committed to ensure that all citizens live in safe and healthy conditions.
- The City's Inspection Division developed guidelines for minimum housing requirements to share with front line service providers so as to aid in identifying possible deficient properties in an effort to ensure their clients are living in adequate housing.

- This guide will provide information on aspects of the City of St. John's minimum housing requirements which would be helpful to support staff / service providers who may have a concern about the condition of a living unit.
- This guide does not cover every housing requirement but does provide enough information to make informed decisions on whether to report inadequate housing.

Housing Types

Single Family Dwelling

- A house, mobile home, trailer or other structure which is designed as a home or residence.
- Permitted to house up to a maximum of four unrelated persons.
- There are no extra code requirements above those occupied by that of ordinary dwellings.
- It does not require a special licence.

Apartment

- Must be self contained with its own kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- Approved apartments are permitted to house up to a maximum of four unrelated persons.
- Three or more apartments in a building may require additional life safety considerations.

Lodging House

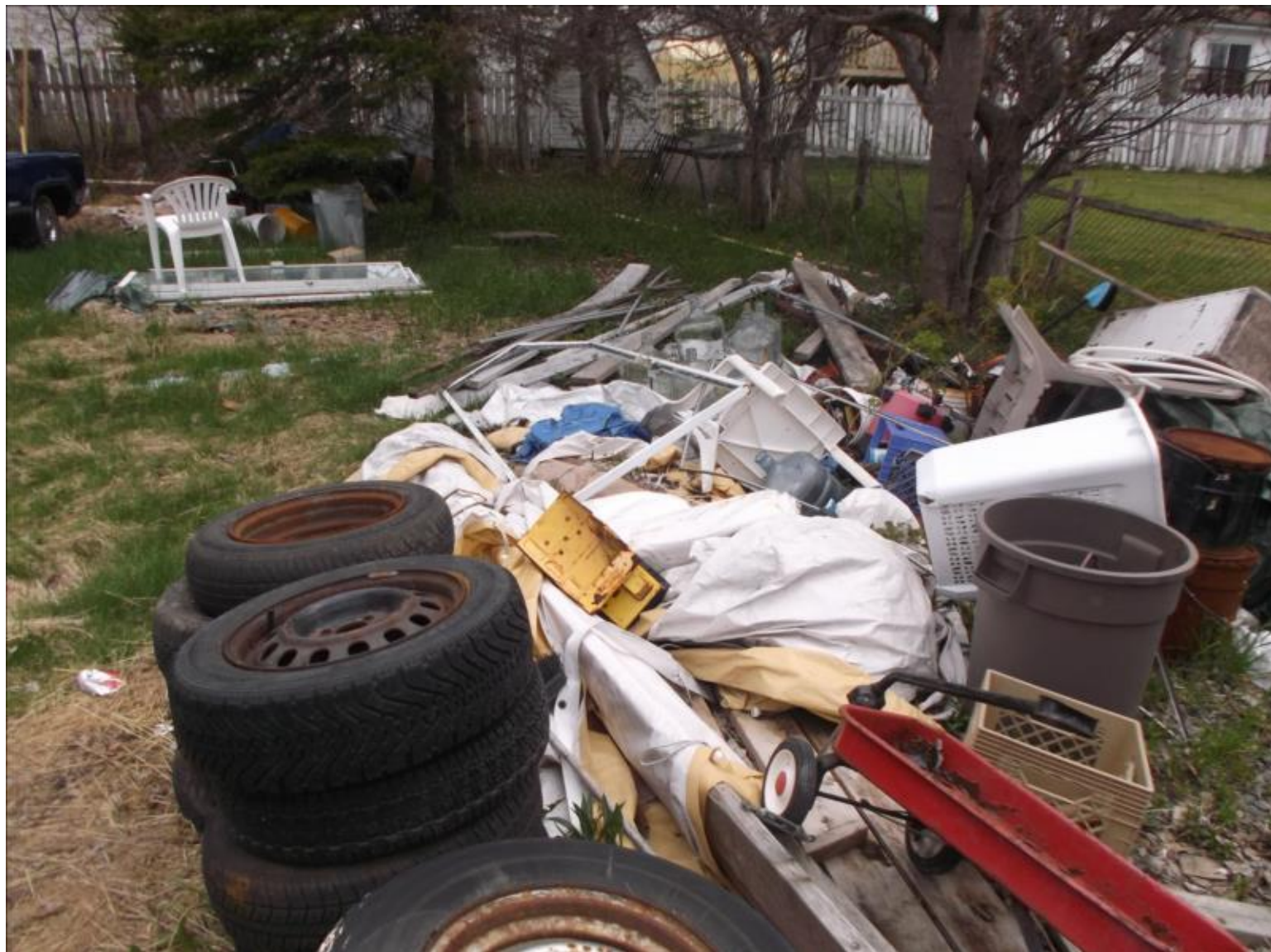
- Permitted to have from 5 to 16 boarders / tenants.
- There are additional life safety requirements for this type of occupancy.
- Typically the tenants share the main kitchen and bathroom facilities but can have their own in the unit.
- Lodging Houses are inspected annually and licenced at a fee of \$100.
- There are presently 12 Licenced Lodging Houses in the City.

General Conditions

- All parts of a property, including yards, sheds or garages must be kept clean and free from any accumulations of rubbish, garbage and/or debris. This is a basic practice in rodent control as well as for reduction of fire hazards.
- No person shall deposit, discard or keep a wrecked vehicle on a residential property.
- Household garbage must be stored in approved receptacles until day of pickup.



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- All residential properties shall be kept free from excessive grass height by reason of not being cut regularly and are excessive when compared with neighbouring properties.



- Floors, walls, ceilings and other surfaces must be maintained in good condition, free from holes, cracks, loose coverings, trip hazards and must be covered with suitable materials.
- The surface of every wall and ceiling in a dwelling unit shall be maintained in a clean condition.





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- Stairs, guardrails, handrails, etc., must be maintained in good structural condition with no holes or loose portions.



- Doors and windows shall be maintained in good repair and weather tight. This shall include door and window hardware such as knobs, locking devices, etc.





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- Every exterior wall of a dwelling and components thereof shall have:
 - Suitable cladding
 - Be in good repair
 - Weather tight
 - Free from loose or unsecured objects or materials
- The maintenance of the exterior wall shall include painting of all exterior wood, etc.



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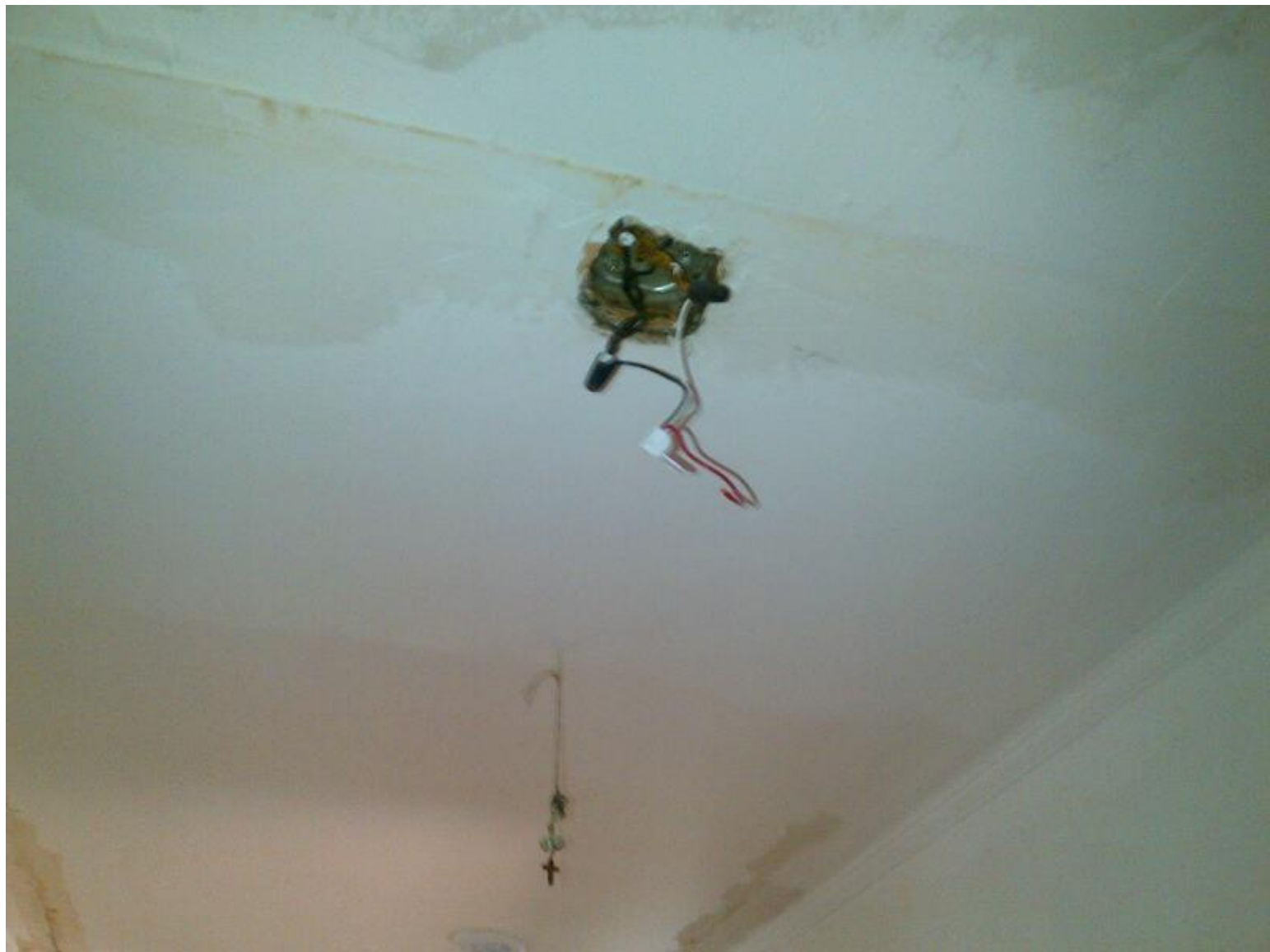


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- All parts of a dwelling's structure must be in good condition. This means roof, walls, floors, windows, doors and foundations. The dwelling must be weather tight and free from rot or weakened members.
- Exterior components must have a weather resistant finish.
- Exterior patios, verandas, etc., must be maintained in good condition and free from rot or weakened members.

Fire and Life Safety

- All dwelling units shall be effectively separated from one another so as to reduce the spread of fire.
- At least one operable smoke alarm must be on each floor of a dwelling where there are bedrooms or sleeping areas.
 - Battery-powered smoke alarms are permitted in older houses as long as the batteries are in good working order.
 - Smoke alarms should be located on the ceiling away from corners, obstructions or heat sources (lights) and should be always located near bedrooms.
 - Smoke alarms in newer homes must be hard-wired into the Electrical system.



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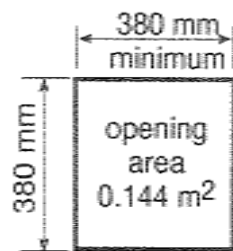


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- All fire separations shall be maintained such that no cracks, holes, openings or other defects exist which could reduce the effectiveness of the fire separation.



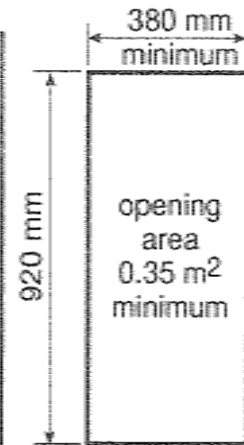
- Bedrooms / sleeping areas must have one openable window for emergency escape purposes in case of fire.
 - The window must be easily opened without tools or special knowledge and the opening must be large enough for an adult to fit through, typically 540 square inches with no dimension less than 15 inches.



(a)

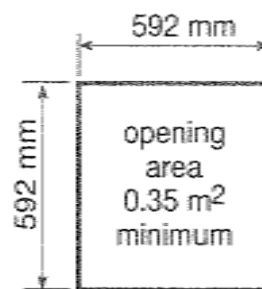
(a) conforms to opening height and width requirements; does not conform to opening area requirements

Does not comply



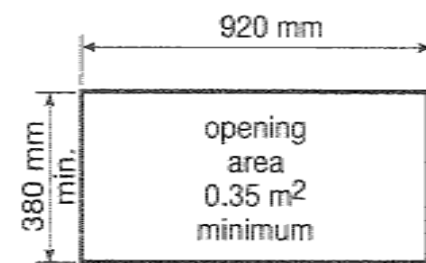
(b)

Comply



(c)

(b), (c) and (d) conform to height, width and opening area requirements



(d)

EC003184

- In buildings with fire exits / escapes, the doors, windows, hallways and/or stairs which access the exit cannot be blocked by furniture, stored material, etc.
 - Outside fire exit stairs must be kept free from ice and snow build-up and be maintained in good condition at all times.
- Fire doors (doors with self-closing mechanisms) cannot be wedged open and must be maintained in good repair.
- As noted in the General Section above, excessive accumulations of garbage, debris, combustible storage material, etc., can create a potential fire hazard.

Apartment Buildings / Lodging Houses

- Apartment buildings, boarding / rooming houses (with more than four persons) may have special technical requirements for life safety which must be reviewed or determined by an inspector.
 - Some of the features which may be required include; fire-rated stairwells and corridors including fire doors with self-closing devices, fire escapes with adjacent windows protected (wired glass in steel frames), fire alarm systems, exit signs, emergency lighting and AC (wired-in) smoke alarms.

Electrical

- In most cases each occupant should have access to the electrical panel which controls the circuits for his/her rental space. The panel should not be located in a locked room or the area blocked with debris.
- All rooms in dwelling units must have adequate electrical outlets in good working order to supply the required electrical demand.
- All rooms, hallways and stairs must have adequate electrical lighting.

- Every dwelling shall be provided with a heating system capable of maintaining a room temperature of not less than 20°C.



- Extension cords should not be used for permanent wiring or placed under carpets, rugs, through doorways or other such locations where they can create a hazard.



- If an occupant is experiencing fuses blowing or breakers tripping regularly, the matter should be reported to the City's Customer Service Centre.

Plumbing

- Every dwelling unit must have hot and cold running water supplying a kitchen sink, bathroom sink, bathtub or shower and cold water supplying a toilet.
- All plumbing fixtures including bathtubs, sinks, etc., must be in good working condition and kept clean and sanitary.



Heating / Ventilation

- Any supplementary heating such as oil or wood stoves, space heaters or fireplaces which appear particularly old or in poor condition or seem questionable should be reported.
- Thermal insulation may be required when heat loss or heat gain or air infiltration is sustained to the extent that excessive room temperature variations are caused, thereby preventing the heating system from maintaining normal room temperature as required under normal operating input.

- All rooms except undeveloped basements, garages, storage rooms, porches and similar spaces must have adequate natural ventilation (openable window) or approved mechanical ventilation.
- Excessive moisture or mildew can indicate inadequate ventilation, heating, insulation or any combination of these.

How to Report?



ONE STOP CITY SERVICE
access **311**
stjohns.ca

- The City of St. John's is equipped with a 24-hour call centre (Access St. John's) and can be accessed by calling 311 or (709) 754-CITY or persons can access through a dedicated website, www.stjohns.ca/access-311.
- A city representative will take your complaint and forward it to the City's Inspection Services Division for investigation.

What Happens When a Complaint is Received?

- Customer service personnel will take all required information and generate a file for investigation by the Inspection Services Division.
- If the complainant is anonymous with no contact information provided, the inspector may have to issue an entry notice to the property owner advising of a date and time to enter.
- If entry notice is not complied with, the matter gets referred to the City's Legal Division for court order for entry which may include RNC assistance.
- May be a lengthy process.

- When entry is gained and deficiencies are observed by the inspector, a written order outlining the deficiencies is issued to the property owner with time frames to have the items corrected. There are occasions where inspection staff encounters living conditions where the health and safety of the occupant is in question. This may be a combination of the above mentioned deficiencies or it could be a single item such as an electrical concern, a questionable electrical service, etc. In these cases, the inspector, in conjunction with Management staff, may decide to issue a closure order of the unit and order the unit to be vacated.

- If a dwelling unit receives a closure order and the tenants are receiving assistance from Advanced Education and Skills, we try and coordinate with this Department on ensuring that emergency accommodations are provided for.

What Happens in Non-Compliance?

- When deficiencies are observed and the property owner has been served with a written notice, he is obligated to comply as per the City Act and the applicable by-laws / regulations.
- Failure of the owner to comply will result in:
 - tickets or fines of \$100 per offence being issued;
 - the City possibly correcting the deficiencies with all costs incurred charged to the property owner; and/or
 - matter being referred for legal action.
- The City, with the aid of the provincial government, enacted ticket legislation in 2008 and works the same as any other form of ticket with time frame to pay or contest.

- If a person contests a ticket, the inspector will have to attend court on behalf of the City to defend the tickets which have been issued.
- If the matter gets referred for legal action, a summons is prepared and a court date is set with the provincial courts.
- Current legislation gives the maximum fine of \$5,000 for serious life safety offences.
- The amount of the fine is dependent on the judge overseeing the trial and the seriousness of the offence.

Questions?



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