Fire and Life Safety for the Town Health Officer

Presented by Fire Marshal Josh Cox
St. Albans City Fire Department
July 10, 2013
Agenda

1. Housing Stock & Construction
2. Heating Issues
3. Electrical Issues
4. Hoarding (And Other Occupant Actions That Create A Hazard)
5. Overlapping Codes
6. Q & A
30% of Vermont’s Housing Stock Was Built Before 1940

In St. Albans City, the average age of a rented dwelling unit is 112 years.
Predominate Construction Before 1940

Balloon Frame
Holes in walls and ceilings provide a natural path for combustion products to rapidly travel...

...within walls

...and to other apartments.
Every owner of a dwelling or rooming house shall provide and maintain the foundation, floors, walls, doors, windows, ceilings, roof, staircases, chimneys and other structural elements of his or her dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house or rooming unit so that it is weather-tight, rodent proof and in good repair.*

*RHHC, § VIII, A
In 2012, Here Are The Leading Causes Of Fire In Vermont

- Heating (36%)
- Cooking (31%)
- Electrical (4%)
- All Others, Including Unknown Cause, Suspicious Act, Smoking, Act of Nature, Etc. (29%)

Heating: The Leading Cause of Fire In Vermont
Heating:
The Leading Cause of Fire In Vermont
Heating facilities shall be properly functioning and in good repair.*

*RHHC, § V, B
All electrical systems in dwellings, rooming houses and on rented mobile home lots shall be maintained in safe working condition.*
Electrical Issues

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*RHHC, § VII, E
## PERMIT & LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

**When do you need a state permit or license?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects within a Single Family Owner: Occupied home that includes: new construction, alterations, renovations or the installation of fixtures.</th>
<th>DFS State Construction Permit</th>
<th>DFS Electrical</th>
<th>DFS Plumbing</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>NO</td>
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| Projects within a Rental Property or Apartment Buildings having more than two units that includes: new construction, alterations, renovations or the installation of fixtures. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Projects within a Duplex or a Rental single family home that includes: new construction, alterations, renovations or the installation of fixtures. | Yes | Yes | NO | Yes | Yes |
| Maintenance projects within a public building such as painting, replacement of broken fixtures with fixture that is an exact match. | NO | NO | Yes | NO | Yes | Includes Fire protection systems, Fire alarm system, Fire sprinkler, Kitchen hood & suppression, Elevators, etc. |
| Public Building Renovations, Additions, Alterations, Modifications and New Building Projects. See Annex I in Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code for definition of Public Building. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| The erection of temporary tents greater than 1,200 square feet in a public location | Yes | Yes | Yes | | x | x |

Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code section 7 (a) The owner, or a designated representative, of a building or premises shall obtain a construction permit before beginning any construction, addition, alteration, demolition or installation of fixed building equipment at the building site unless specifically waived by the AHJ.
Hoarding
Every occupant shall exercise reasonable care in the use of his or her dwelling unit, rooming unit or rented mobile home lot and shall maintain it in such a manner that it does not create a health hazard for his or her neighbors.*

*RHHC, § X, B(2)
Hoarding
Every occupant shall exercise reasonable care in the use of his or her dwelling unit, rooming unit or rented mobile home lot and shall maintain it in such a manner that it does not create a health hazard for his or her neighbors.*

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*RHHC, § X, B(2)
Often The Codes Overlap –

Because They Have Similar Goals

- Rental Housing Health Code
- Life Safety & Quality of Life
- Vermont Fire & Building Safety Code
Every habitable room shall include at least one window or door in good repair located on an outside wall that is capable of being opened to admit fresh air.*

*RHHC, § VI, A(1)

NFPA 1:14.4.1 - 2012 Edition:
Means of egress shall be continuously maintained free of all obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency.
Health Officers Are Often On The Frontline Of Fire Safety

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Housing (2011)
Need Help With A Fire Safety Issue? We’re Here To Help.

- Local Fire Chief
- Div. Of Fire Safety
- THO ListServ
Q & A

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References

• “30% of Vermont’s housing stock was built before 1940”

• “In St. Albans City, the average age of a rented dwelling unit is 112 years.”
  St. Albans City Fire Department, (July 2013) Rental Registry Inspection Database

• “Heating: The leading cause of fire in Vermont.”

• “Health Officers are often on the frontline of fire safety.”
  U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division. (October 2011)