

STATE'S RENTAL HOUSING CODE AMENDED

As of March 1, 2006, there will be a new rental housing code in effect in Vermont. The rental housing code is adopted by the Vermont Department of Health and establishes minimum health and habitability standards that all residential rental housing must conform to. The former code was developed in 1974 and did not reflect recent changes in law or newer health and habitability standards.

The new code makes a number of changes to the Sanitation Facilities section. In particular, bathroom requirements for rooming houses are aligned with the Vermont State Plumbing Code. Rooming houses now require one toilet and one sink for every ten persons and one bathtub/shower for every eight persons, instead of one of each for every six persons. In addition, rental mobile homes are required to have potable water from a public water supply system or a private supply that is free from impurities, pursuant to Health Department guidelines. Rental mobile homes must also provide a hookup to a public sewage system or a properly operating subsurface wastewater disposal system. The code specifies that disposal systems must be operated so sewage does not back-up into the dwelling, flow to the ground surface or directly into surface water. Finally, a new section on mobile homes on a rented lot specifies that the mobile home lot owner is responsible for electrical services, water supply, and sewage disposal.

The code makes additional changes – mostly updates on definitions – to sections relating to insects and rodents, heating, ventilation, lighting, and structural elements. In addition, the new code removes the variance process found in the earlier code.

The new code also removes sections relating to enforcement of the code, as it was duplicative of the process provided in statute. Under the new code, enforcement responsibility will continue to be vested with the Town Health Officer, the Local Board of Health, and the Health Commissioner pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 124 et seq. Town health officers considering taking an enforcement action based on the health code are encouraged to consult with the Department of Health and their town attorney.

Please contact the Health Department at 800/464-4343 for a copy of the new Rental Housing Code.

- Dominic Cloud, Director, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center

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