

**NORTH COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
Policy and Procedure Manual**

FIRE PREVENTION  
PLANS AND PERMITS

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**Residential Care Facilities**

**PURPOSE:** This guideline is intended to provide the minimum requirements necessary for review and approval of residentially based licensed care facilities within NCFPD's jurisdiction. The guideline has been prepared using the California Fire and Building Codes and the California Code of Regulations, Title 19.

**POLICY:** Residential Care Facilities shall be governed by NCFPD personnel via utilization of the guidelines contained herein.

**SCOPE:** The regulations regarding residentially based care facilities are found in the California Code of Regulations Titles 19 and 24, and in CBC 1995 RCFE pamphlet published by CRCAC. The following guidelines will ensure that appropriate requirements are met. Refer to the [Large Family Day Care](#) policy for multiple use residential facilities not meeting the definitions described below.

**DEFINITIONS:**

- I. R-2.1 Residentially-based, licensed facilities accommodating more than six non-ambulatory clients. This division may include ambulatory clients. These classifications will include such facilities as Adult Residential Facilities, Congregate Living Health Facilities, Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE), Group Homes and Residential Care Facilities for the Chronically III.
  
- II. R-2.1 .1 Residentially-based, licensed facilities accommodating six or less non-ambulatory clients. This division may include ambulatory clients. Licensing categories that may use this classification include Adult Residential Facilities, Congregate Living Health Facilities, Foster Family Homes, Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled Habilitative, Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled Nursing, nurseries for the full time care of children under the age of six, but not including "infants" as defined in CBC Section 210; Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly, Small Family Homes and residential Care Facilities for the Chronically III. *Note: "Infant" is defined as any child who, because of age only, is unable to walk and requires the aid of another person to evacuate the building. In no case shall the term "infant" mean a child over the age of two.*
  
- III. R-2.2 Residentially-based, licensed facilities accommodating more than six ambulatory clients. This division may include non-ambulatory clients and shall not exceed six non-ambulatory clients. Licensing categories that may use this classification include Adult Residential Facilities, Residential Care Facilities for

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the Elderly (RCFE), Group Homes, Community Treatment Facilities and Social Rehabilitation-C Facilities.

- IV. R-2.2.1 Residentially-based, licensed facilities accommodating six or less ambulatory clients. This division may include a maximum of two non-ambulatory clients. Licensing categories that may use this classification include, Adult Residential Facilities, Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled Habilitative, Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled Nursing, Nursing Homes, Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly, Foster Family Homes, Group Homes, Small Family Homes, Community Treatment Facilities and Social Rehabilitation Facilities.
- V. R-2.3 Residentially-based, licensed facilities providing hospice care throughout accommodating more than six bedridden clients. Licensing categories that may use this classification include Congregate Living Health Facilities for the Terminally Ill, and Residential Care Facilities for the Chronically Ill.
- VI. R-2.3.1 Residentially-based facilities providing hospice care throughout accommodating six or less bedridden clients. Licensing categories include Congregate Living Health Facilities for the Terminally Ill and Residential Care Facilities for the Chronically Ill.

**PROCEDURE:**

- I. **PLAN REVIEW:** Prior to requesting a fire safety inspection, two sets of dimensioned site and floor plans shall be submitted to the Fire Prevention Bureau for review and approval. All dimensions must be included. A floor plan showing furniture layout shall be provided for each client bedroom. Aisle widths shall be indicated in the plan even though furniture does not need to be drawn to scale. Furniture shall be in place for inspection. Please submit these drawings two weeks prior to requesting inspection. The plans must include the following:
- A. The address of the building
  - B. The occupancy classification as described above
  - C. Smoke detector locations
  - D. Locations of exit doors
  - E. Locations of landings, ramps, stairways, steps, sidewalks and gates
- II. **ZONING APPROVAL.** A fire clearance **does not** constitute zoning clearance. Instruct the applicant to contact DPLU for zoning information.

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- III. **SITE INSPECTION.** RCFEs are inspected annually as an element of the [engine company occupancy inspection program](#). The [RCFE inspection guide](#) may be used to assist in these inspections. Any changes in occupancy classification, occupant load, or license require review by the Bureau.
- A. **Address.** Address numbers shall be posted on the house and shall be visible from the street. Said numbers shall contrast with their background and shall be sufficiently illuminated for viewing the numbers at night. Illumination may be either internal or external.
  - B. **Gates:** Access gates, if installed, shall conform to the NCFPD [Electric Gates](#) policy.
  - C. **Building Exits.** There shall be a minimum of two exits from the dwelling. All exits (doors and gates) shall have a single action, no knowledge required hardware. This hardware is openable from the inside without a key or any special knowledge or effort. If a deadbolt is provided, it shall release when the primary door knob or lever is turned. If special egress control devices are used, refer to the [Special Egress Control](#) policy. No other locks or latches shall be on doors or gates.
  - D. **Exit Width.** Exits shall be 36 inches wide by 6 feet 8 inches and provide a 32 inch clear opening. A sliding door may be used as an exit from bedrooms; however, in order to provide a 32 inch clear opening, a 6 foot or larger door will be necessary. Exits shall not pass through kitchens, garages, store rooms, closets and shall not pass through more than one intervening room.
  - E. **Bedroom Exiting.** Bedrooms used by non-ambulatory clients shall have access to at least one required exit which conforms to one of the following:
    - 1. Exits through a corridor/hallway or area and into a bedroom (in the immediate area) which has an exit directly to the exterior. Bedroom doors used as exits shall have exit signs and shall not be provided with a lock or latch preventing egress.
    - 2. The color and design of lettering, arrows, and other symbols on exit signs shall be of high contrast with their background. Words on the sign shall be in block letters 6 inches in height with a stroke of not less than

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½ inch.

3. Through a corridor/hallway serving the sleeping area which exits directly to the exterior.
  4. Direct from the bedroom to the exterior.
  5. Exit through an adjoining bedroom that exits to the exterior. (No privacy locks on bedrooms allowed, if exiting through bedroom.)
- F. Exit Obstructions. No bed, chair, equipment, storage materials, or any other item shall be placed in any manner that would block or obstruct the required width of any exit. This shall include the exterior sidewalks leading from the exits to the public way.
- G. Landings. A floor or landing shall be provided on each side of every exit door. The floor or landing shall not be more than 1/2" lower than the threshold of the doorway.
1. The exterior floor or landing shall have a minimum length of 44 inches and be at least as wide as the opening.
  2. For hinged doors, the landing shall extend 24 inches past the edge of the door.
- H. Ramps. If the exterior landing has more than ½ inch step down, a ramp shall be provided. The slope of the ramp shall not be steeper than 1 inch vertical to 12 inches horizontal with a minimum clear width of 36 inches. Ramps shall have a non-skid surface. As an example, a 6 inch drop from a landing would require a 6 foot long ramp.
- I. Handrails. Handrails shall be provided on each side of the ramp. Handrails shall be 30 to 34 inches above the ramp surface. These handrails shall be 1 1/4" to 2" in cross section dimension.
- J. Guardrails. Guardrails shall be provided if ramps are more than 30 inches above grade. The top of guardrails shall not be less than 36" in height.
- K. Fire Extinguishers. A fire extinguisher with a minimum classification of 2A10BC shall be mounted in a conspicuous and unobstructed location. The top of the extinguisher shall be between 3 and 5 feet above finished floor. The extinguisher

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shall be serviced annually by a licensed company and affixed with a tag either annually or after each use.

- L. Attached Garages. If the garage is attached to the dwelling, the door between the dwelling and the garage shall be maintained to be self-closing and latching. The door shall be a minimum of 1 3/8" thick solid wood door. The garage shall not be used for sleeping purposes. There shall be no openings from the garage into any of the sleeping areas. Maintain garage in neat, orderly fashion with a minimum of combustible storage and 18" clearance from the water heater shall be maintained.
- M. Housekeeping: Good housekeeping shall be maintained. The storage of flammable and combustible liquids is not permitted.
- N. Spark Arrestors. Chimneys shall be equipped with a spark arrestor.
- O. Fire Alarms. A manual pull station and bell shall be installed in the facility. All devices shall be California State Fire Marshal approved. The wiring shall be in accordance with the National Electric Code. The fire alarm, when initiated, will provide a distinctive tone that shall be audible throughout the facility. An alarm permit is required for the installation of this device from the County DPLU.
- P. Smoke Detectors. A smoke detector shall be installed in each sleeping room and at a point centrally located in the corridor or area giving access to sleeping areas. Additional detectors may be required for vaulted ceilings adjacent to the corridor. Detectors shall sound an alarm audible in all sleeping areas of the unit in which they are located. This may require interconnected smoke detectors of a fire alarm system.
- Q. Sprinkler Systems. Sprinkler systems shall be inspected quarterly and be certified every 5 years. System to be tested to ensure activation of alarm system. Spare heads and a wrench are required.
- R. Heat Producing Appliances. Furnaces, water heaters, etc., shall be appropriately vented (intake air directly from outside, exhaust air directly to outside) in accordance with the building code. Maintain 18" clearance from combustibles.
- S. Permits. Permits shall be secured from the local building department as required for changes in occupancy classification, number of occupants, structural and electrical modifications.