

STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

(R2.1.1 & R2.2.1 Occupancies for six or fewer clients)

*For Use by Unidocs Member Agencies or where approved by your Local Jurisdiction
Authority Cited: California Fire Code (CFC); California Building Code (CBC);
California Health & Safety Code; Title 19, California Code of Regulations (CCR)*

This document is intended to help residential care facility owners/operators comply with minimum requirements necessary for local fire jurisdiction review and approval of licensed care facilities housing six (6) or fewer clients in single-family residences. It does not address every possible code or situation. Regulations regarding residential care facilities are found in the 2001 edition of the California Building Code (CBC), the California Fire Code (CFC), and Title 19 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The fire department inspection does not constitute zoning or building department approval. The applicant is urged to contact both their local Planning and Building Departments to ensure that all local conditions and requirements are clearly understood before applying for state licensing.

A. Submittal Requirements

Prior to requesting a fire safety inspection, two (2) sets of site and floor plans, drawn to scale or including all pertinent dimensions shall be submitted to the local fire authority for review and approval. Please submit these drawings at least two (2) weeks prior to requesting an inspection. Depending on the specific project, it may be necessary to provide information beyond what is described in this guidance document.

B. General Requirements

- 1. Address Numbers** – Address numbers shall be provided for all new and existing buildings in such a position as to be plainly visible and legible from the street or road fronting the property. [CFC §901.4.4]
- 2. Garages** – If a garage is attached to the residence, the door between the residence and the garage shall be maintained to be self-closing and self-latching. The door shall be fire rated or a minimum 1-3/4 inch (") thick solid wood door. The garage shall not be used for sleeping purposes. There shall be no openings from the garage into any portion of the residence. Maintain the garage in a neat, orderly fashion with minimal combustible storage. Clearance between the water heater and any combustible material shall be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and the heater's listing. Typically, 18" is the minimum clearance required. [CBC §312.4; CFC §§1107.1 and 1109.2]
- 3. Stairway Doors** – A non-rated door may be used to provide the required floor separation to prevent smoke migration between floors. The door shall have the equivalent construction of 1/2" gypsum wallboard on one side of the wall studs (e.g., 20 minute rated assembly or 1-3/8" solid core door). The door shall be tight-fitting, positive latching, smoke gasketed, and automatic closing upon activation of the smoke detector. This requirement will be waived if the building is provided with fire sprinklers or has at least one exterior exit from each floor occupied by clients. [CBC §1007.6.3.6]
- 4. Bedridden Clients** – Clients who become temporarily bedridden may continue to be housed on any story in homes classified as a Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (RCFE). Every RCFE admitting or retaining a bedridden resident shall, within 48 hours of the resident's admission or retention in the facility, notify the local fire department of the estimated length of time the resident will retain his or her bedridden status in the facility. [CBC §310.1.1]

- 5. Decorative Materials** – Decorative materials in all residential care occupancies, including drapes, wall hangings, curtains, and seasonal decorations, (i.e., Christmas trees) located in the common areas of the residence shall be inherently non-flammable or made flame-retardant by a process approved by the State Fire Marshal, in accordance with Title 19 §3.08.

Exception: Decorative materials inside clients' bedrooms need not comply with this section.

C. Exits and Locking Devices

- 1. Bedroom Exits** – Bedrooms used by non-ambulatory clients shall have access to at least one required exit that conforms to one or more of the conditions listed below. [CBC §10007.6.3.2.2]
- An exit that leads directly from the bedroom to the exterior.
 - An exit that passes through an adjoining bedroom which exits to the exterior. (*Note: No privacy locks on bedroom doors are allowed if the exit goes through an adjoining bedroom.*)
 - An exit that passes 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 latch or lock preventing egress. The color and design of lettering, arrows, and other symbols on exit signs shall be of high contrast with their background. Words on the signs shall be in black letters, 6" in height with a stroke of not less than 3/4".
 - An exit that passes through a corridor/hallway serving the sleeping area, which then exits directly to the exterior.
 - Corridors and hallways on floors serving clients shall be a minimum of 36" in width. 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 corridor, hallway, door, or exit path. This shall include the exterior sidewalks leading from the exit to the public way. [CBC §1007.6.3.3.1]
 - In addition to exit doors, all sleeping rooms are required to have escape or rescue windows with a minimum net clear openable area of 5.7 square feet (24" high by 20" wide) which shall have a finished maximum sill height of 44" above the floor. Escape or rescue windows shall not have bars, grilles or gates, unless they meet the requirements in CBC §310.4 for emergency release.

Note: In situations c & d above, there shall be a doorway that separates the exit corridor/hallway from the common use areas. This door shall be positive latching. [CSFM Interpretation #02-046]

- 2. Exit Door Hardware** – There shall be a minimum of two exits from the residence. All exits (i.e., doors and gates) shall have single-action hardware. This hardware is openable from the inside without a key or any special knowledge or effort. If a deadbolt is provided, it shall automatically release when the primary doorknob or lever is turned. No other locks or latches shall be installed on doors, screen doors, or gates. Exits shall be at least three feet wide by six feet eight inches high and provide a 32" clear opening. [CBC §§1003.3.1, 1007.6.3.1.1, and 1007.6.3.2.3]

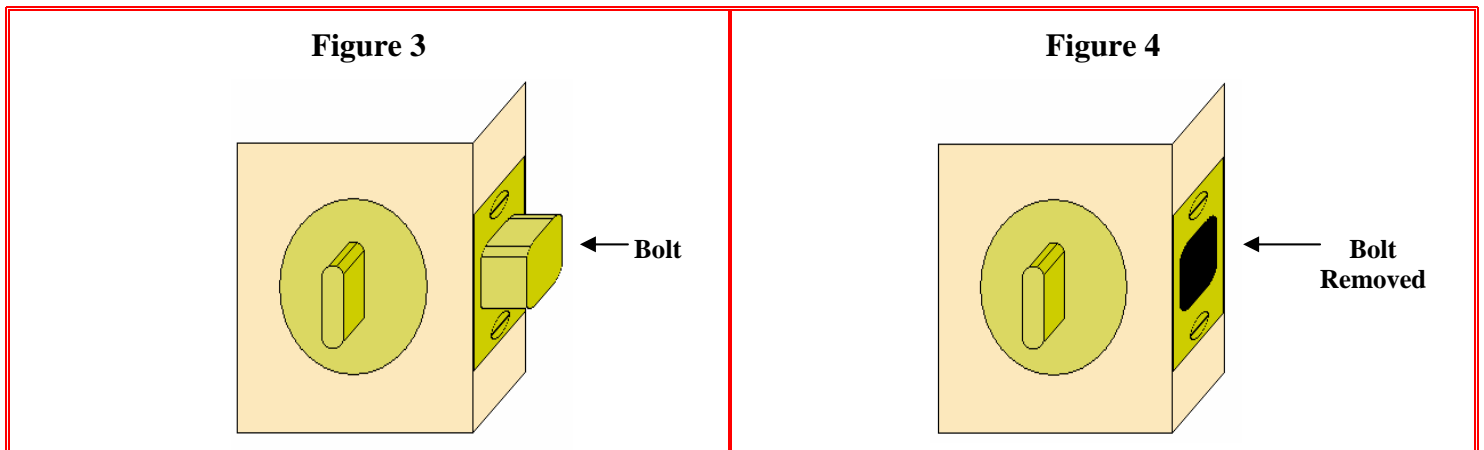
Tip

If a locked door opens when the doorknob is turned without a key, you have the right type of lock. If the door does not open, the lock must be changed.

- 3. Deadbolt Locks** – When deadbolt security is desired, the locks shown in Figure 1, on the next page, are examples of types which satisfy lock requirements. According to the manufacturers, these locks provide a greater level of security than a regular door knob, and are available locally from many retailers.



- 4. Removal of Prohibited Locks** – The types of locks shown in Figure 2 are not allowed and must be removed if installed. When required to remove a deadbolt, you may remove the bolt and leave the faceplate as shown in Figure 4, below.



- 5. Sliding Doors** – Sliding doors may be approved as required exits provided that only the manufacturer's locking/latching hardware is used. No additional locks or devices (e.g., broomsticks placed in the track) may be added. See Figure 5 on the next page for details.
- 6. Landings** – A floor or landing shall be provided on each side of every exit door. The exterior floor or landing shall have a minimum length of 44" and be at least as wide as the opening. Landings for hinged doors shall extend 24" past the edge of the door. [CBC §1003.3.1.7]
- 7. Ramps** – If any part of the exit path for non-ambulatory residents is more than one-half inch difference in elevation, a ramp shall be installed. The slope of the ramp shall not be steeper than 1" vertical to 12" horizontal with a minimum clear width of three feet. For example, a 6" drop from a landing would require a six foot long ramp. Ramps shall have a non-skid surface. [CBC §1007.6.3.4]
- 8. Hand Rails** – Hand rails shall be provided on each side of any ramp. Hand rails shall be 34" to 38" above the ramp surface. These handrails shall be 1¼" to 2" in cross-section dimension. [CBC §1003.3.4]

9. **Guard Rails** – Guard rails shall be provided if ramps are more than 30” above grade. The top of each guard rail shall be at least 36” in height. [CBC §1003.3.4]

Figure 5
Sliding Door Details

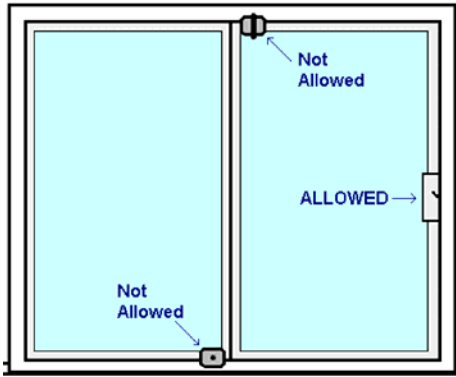


Figure 6
Ramp Details



Note: Items 6 through 9 list only the major requirements for non-ambulatory exiting. Check with your local Building Department for necessary permits and further requirements.

D. Smoke Detectors and Fire Alarms

1. **Smoke Detectors** – A smoke detector/alarm shall be installed in each sleeping room and at a point centrally located in the corridor or area giving access to the sleeping areas. Additional detectors/alarms may be required for vaulted ceilings adjacent to the corridor. Detectors/alarms shall sound an alarm audible in all sleeping areas of the unit in which they are located. [CFC §1006.2.9.3.3]

New construction requires smoke detectors to be interconnected and wired directly into the home’s electrical system. Detectors shall be equipped with battery back-up. [CBC §310.9.1]

Exception: For existing homes undergoing conversion to a residential care home, smoke detectors that use batteries as their sole source of power are acceptable unless alterations or additions to the building exceed \$1,000.

2. **Manual Pull Station** – A manual pull station and alarm device shall be installed in the facility. The manual alarm pull station shall be listed by the California State Fire Marshal. The wiring shall be in accordance with the National Electric Code. The fire alarm, when activated, shall provide a distinctive tone and shall be audible throughout the facility. [CBC §310.10.2 and CFC §1006.2.9.2.3]

The power supply to the manual pull station shall be wired on a circuit that cannot be interrupted by a disconnecting switch (e.g., wall switch). It is preferable that the circuit the manual pull station is wired to also serve other commonly used appliances in the residence. The manual alarm need not be interconnected to any other fire alarm device, electronically supervised, or provided with emergency power. Check with your local Building Department for permit requirements. [CFC §1006.2.9.2.3]

Figure 7



E. Fire Extinguishers

A fire extinguisher with a minimum classification of 2A:10B:C (see Figure 8, below) shall be mounted in a conspicuous and unobstructed location. The top of the extinguisher shall be between three and five feet above the finished floor. The extinguisher shall be serviced by a state-licensed company and affixed with a tag annually, or immediately after each use (see Figure 9, below). When purchasing a new fire extinguisher, be sure to check the label for the date of manufacture. The unit will need to be serviced one year from this date, so choose the one with the most current date possible.

Tip

Look in the yellow pages under “Fire Extinguishers” for a State-certified fire extinguisher contractor.

