

Healthy Housing and Vector Control Program Fee Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Does the San Francisco Department of Public Environmental Health have the right to charge me and other apartment owners an annual fee?

A: Yes. Effective September 1, 2008, the San Francisco Health Code authorized the Department of Public Health to collect an annual fee to defray costs necessary to implement a program to ensure that apartment buildings are in compliance with vector (pest) control, sanitation and health standards.

Q: What does it pay for?

A: Beginning in January 2009 Environmental Health Staff inspect portions of apartment buildings with three or more occupied rental units to ensure that adequate levels of sanitation are being maintained by the property owners. More specifically, trained technicians look at common areas, yards, garbage storage areas and lobbies for signs of infestations from disease-causing vectors such as rodents, mosquitoes, flies, cockroaches and wild birds, as well as readily identified lead and asbestos hazards or other health code violations. Staff will provide advice on pest prevention, as well as printed materials on a variety of healthy housing topics.

The Healthy Housing Program's goal is to inspect each building once every 3 years. The fee also covers the costs of complaint investigation visits plus one re-inspection visit per year which would otherwise be charged at a rate of \$173/hour.

Q: How will I be notified of an upcoming inspection?

A: The owners of record will receive a letter from the Healthy Housing program staff at least 10 days prior to an inspection, allowing for confirmation or re-scheduling to a mutually convenient time. Inspections of common areas may also be performed as part of a complaint investigation visit.

Q: What determines the amount of the fee charged?

A: The fee is based on the number of rental units. "Rental unit" means a dwelling unit, as that term is defined by Section 401 of the San Francisco Building Code, which is rented or offered for rental at any time during the year, whether rent is paid in money, goods, or services.

Q: Why have license fees increased?

A: Fees initially assessed during fiscal year 2008-2009 did not reflect the full cost of the rental apartment inspection program. Thus, the increase in fees assessed for fiscal year 2009-10 reflects the phase-in of the license fees over the initial two years of program development.

Fee changes for some owners are expected, primarily due to a reevaluation of inventory. Fee will also be adjusted to ensure all owners are paying a relatively equivalent share of fee per rental unit.

Q: What if my bill has the wrong number of rental units or other incorrect information?

A: If the information regarding the number of rental units is incorrect on your bill, indicate the correct number of units and pay the appropriate fee based on that number. DPH staff will verify the information at a later date. If less than 3 units are being rented or is intended to be rented at any

time during the year, your property is exempt from this ordinance and from any fee. You must sign and date the certification statement at the bottom of the bill page and return it to us.

Q: If I own an apartment building that has 3 units but I live in one of the units, do I need to pay the fee? (This question can also apply to apartment buildings with 4 units.)

A: No. If less than 3 units are being rented or is intended to be rented at any time during the year, your property is exempt from this ordinance and from any fee. However, you need to indicate the number of rental units and the number of owner-occupied units on your bill. You must sign and date the certification statement at the bottom of the bill page and return it to us. Once we received your information, we will exempt your invoice, but you will still receive our invoice annually.

Q: If my building is a Tenancy-In-Common (TIC) building and I received your bill, do I need to pay the fee?

A: No. However, you need to indicate your building is TIC on you bill and submit the TIC proof along with the signed invoice to our program. TIC proof could be the Notification of Individual Assessed Valued for Tenancy-In-Common (TIC) Units from the Office of the Assessor-Recorder, property tax bill that shows TIC homeowner exemption, or TIC agreement. We will exempt your property from our program if the TIC proof is received.

Q: If my building is converted to condominium and I received your bill, do I need to pay the fee?

A: No. However, you need to indicate your building is Condo on your bill and submit the Condo proof along with the signed invoice to our program. Condo proof could be Condominium Grand Deed, Condo conversion document from Department of Public Work, or documents from the Office of the Assessor-Recorder. We will exempt your property from our program if the Condo proof is received.

Q: If my building is converted to commercial building and I received your bill, do I need to pay the fee?

A: No. However, you need to indicate your building is commercial on your bill and submit the business permit along with the signed invoice to our program. Business permits should show the address of each unit number. We will exempt your property from our program if commercial proof is received.

Q: If my building is an apartment building, but some of the units are converted to commercial units, do I need to pay the fee?

A: If there are less than 3 rental units, you don't need to pay the fee. However, you need to indicate the number of rental units and the number of commercial units on your bill. You also need to submit the business permit of the commercial unit along with the signed invoice to our program. We will exempt your property from our program if your proof is received.

If there are more than 3 rental units, indicate the correct number of rental units and the number of commercial units, and pay the appropriate fee based on the number of rental units. You must sign and date the certification statement at the bottom of the bill page and return it to us. Once we received your information, we will exempt your invoice, but you will still receive our invoice annually.

Q: If I have sold my building and I still receive your bill, what do I do?

A: If you are the owner during the billing cycle, you would be responsible for the bill. If you are not the owner during the billing cycle, please indicate you have sold the building and the escrow date. It will

be helpful if you can provide the new owner's name and mailing address because the city record may not reflect the change of ownership immediately.

Q: How do I update my mailing address?

A: You can send a letter, drop in, or call our office to request change of mailing address. You need to provide your property address, block and Lot number, or invoice number for account reference. Due to our database is not linked to any of other City departments, updating your address through City Hall will not reflect the changes.

Q: Why do I have to sign the form every time?

A: Circumstances change and your signature certifies that the information we have on file for the property is still correct, or, should be updated to reflect the new information that you provide.

Q: What happens if I don't pay the fee?

A: The Department is authorized to collect unpaid fees by placing a LIEN on the property for the amount owed plus late fees and interest at the rate of one and one half percent (1.5%) per month. You will be notified before any lien is placed on your property as required by law.

Q: Are there penalties for paying late?

A: Yes. Check your invoice for the due date. If you pay the fee after 30 days of the due date, you must include a late payment penalty of \$10. If you pay the fee after 60 days of the due date, you must include an addition late payment penalty of \$20, (a total of \$30.)