

■ TEMPORARY WORKER HOUSING LAW

TERMS: Under Washington's temporary worker housing law, the state health department has adopted rules requiring employers who provide sleeping or housing accommodations for their workers on a temporary, seasonal basis, to obtain a license for the facility and comply with related requirements, outlined below.

Licensing — In general, the owner or operator of a temporary worker housing facility must apply to the state health department for a license before the housing is occupied each year. Before a license is issued, the facility must be inspected or the operator must submit and receive approval of a self-survey.

Exception — Camps for workers employed in the harvest of cherries must be inspected before occupancy. A license to operate a cherry harvest camp is limited to one week before the start of the harvest until one week after the harvest ends. Cherry harvest camps are the only form of housing in which tents may be used to house temporary workers.

Maximum Occupant Capacity — The rules limit the capacity of housing facilities, based on floor space and the number of toilet, bathing and related facilities actually available.

Housing Standards — Among many other licensing conditions that temporary worker housing must meet are these:

Site — The housing site must be adequately drained, at least 200 feet from pools of standing water, and large enough to prevent overcrowding.

Water Supply — The water system must comply with certain state regulations, and there must be hot and cold running water in each central bathing, laundry, cooking or food-handling area at all times. Family units must be provided with hot and cold running water under pressure.

Sewage Disposal — All sewage and waste water must empty into an approved public or on-site disposal system.

Electricity and Lighting — Living and sleeping areas must have electric service, and rooms must be properly equipped with light fixtures and electrical outlets. Living areas and service rooms must be adequately lighted.

Building Construction — Living and sleeping areas and common facilities must protect against the elements and comply with state and local building codes. There must be locking devices on all outside doors, bedroom doors, and toilet and shower doors (if provided). Buildings must be kept in good repair and sanitary condition. Housing must comply with prescribed minimum requirements on floor space and ceiling height.

Safety Devices — There must be a functioning, properly installed carbon monoxide alarm in each dwelling unit with a sleeping area. Likewise, there must be a properly installed and working smoke alarm in each sleeping and cooking area. Fire extinguishers are required in dwelling units where occupants sleep if the unit does not have a second means of emergency escape.

Laundry Facilities — The housing operator must provide adequate numbers of laundry trays, tubs, or mechanical washing machines, as well as facilities for drying clothes.

Toilet Facilities — There must be adequate numbers of flush toilets (or chemical toilets, if approved by the health department); pit toilets or privies are not allowed. Toilet rooms must be adequately ventilated and screened and maintained in clean and sanitary condition.

Handwashing and Bathing Facilities — The housing operator must provide handwashing and bathing facilities in numbers adequate for the maximum capacity of the housing.

Cooking and Food-Handling Facilities — There must be cooking, food storage and eating facilities in each individual unit, or common food handling facilities that meet prescribed specifications. Among other requirements, in each individual unit or common facility there must be an operable cook stove or hotplate, and mechanical refrigeration capable of maintaining a temperature of 40 degrees F. or below.

Sleeping Facilities — The operator must provide adequate numbers of beds, cots or bunks, furnished with clean mattresses in good condition. Beds must be located and spaced as prescribed in the regulations. For each occupant housed in a common sleeping facility, there must be a suitable enclosed storage space that is lockable and accessible to the occupant.

First Aid and Safety — The use, storage or mixing of flammable or toxic substances other than those intended for household use is prohibited in the housing area. First aid equipment must be provided by the housing operator and kept readily accessible to residents.

Refuse Disposal — The operator must follow local sanitation codes for removing and disposing of trash. Trash and garbage must be stored in fly-tight, rodent-proof, cleanable containers, or in single-use containers. There must be at least one trash container per dwelling unit, located within 100 feet of each unit. Containers must be emptied when full, but no less often than twice each week.

Pest Control — Appropriate measures must be taken to control rodents and insects.

Disease Prevention and Control — The housing operator is required to immediately report to the local health department (1) the name and address of any occupant known to have or suspected of having a communicable disease, and (2) any case of suspected food poisoning or other unusual health incident or situation.

ENFORCEMENT: *Temporary Worker Housing Program, Office of Environmental Health and Safety, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, Washington 98504 (360-236-3330).* This agency is responsible for inspection and licensing of temporary worker housing facilities in Washington.

Washington / Housing / General Employee Housing Standards

SPECIAL NOTE: Temporary worker housing facilities may also be inspected by the *Division of Occupational Safety and Health, Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, Olympia, Washington 98504 (360-902-5494; toll-free 800-423-7233)*.