



Memorandum

To: All apartment complexes
From: Andrew McWhinney, Building & Fire Official 
Date: January 11, 2022
Re: Fire Safety

In light of the recent fire event in New York (Bronx area, 01-09-2022), I am sending this memo and accompanying fire safety sheet in hopes of sharing important fire / life safety information with you and your tenants.

While still early in the investigation phase, it has been determined that one of the major contributing factors leading to smoke and fire spread throughout the building was the failure of a door to close and latch. Over the years, the Monroeville Building Department has provided Fire and Life Safety inspections throughout your buildings. Almost without fail, doors – particularly doors for stairs and hallways – have been found propped open with wood, rocks, cardboard, fire extinguishers, and so forth. In some cases, self-closing doors on individual apartments or common hall areas have been flagged because the closer device was removed or disabled. Each time, the object was removed and a note made on the respective fire inspection report.

The result of doors being propped open or having the closer devices disabled is what we see now in the aftermath of the fire in New York, and why we have strived over the years to work with management and maintenance to keep these doors closed when not in use. Doors to hallways, stairs, and apartments need to be kept closed in order to stop the spread of smoke, heat, and fire. In addition to keeping the exits clear for occupants, it should be noted that several firefighter deaths have occurred because of these doors being left open. Open doors to balconies can let the fire spread to adjoining decks and apartments above the fire area.

Management, maintenance, and tenants need to be aware of the hazards created by open doors, whether it is due to them being propped open, having the closers removed or damaged, or something as simple as the door not being able to close due to new carpet or rugs.

Please share this memo and fire safety information with your tenants to spread awareness and help keep our citizens and community safe.

- Keep doors closed when not in use
- If there is a fire in your apartment and you need to leave, be sure the door closes behind you.
 - This is true even for apartment complexes without interior hallways
- Know your escape routes
- Know where fire extinguishers are
- Know how to operate the building's fire alarm
- Never assume that a fire alarm is a 'false' alarm
- Contact management with any safety concerns. If you feel there is a serious concern, contact the Monroeville Building Department at 412-856-3340 or via email at BuildingInspectors@monroeville.pa.us

Information provided by the Monroeville Building Department and the U.S. Fire Administration

Apartment fire safety begins with a plan.

Don't Let Your World Go Up in Smoke.



If you live in an apartment or condominium you need to know how to get out quickly if a fire starts. Follow these steps to stay safe.

Building Fire Safety

- Don't prop open exit or stairway doors. These are installed to slow the spread of heat and smoke if there is a fire.
- Speak to your apartment manager if you see a damaged smoke alarm, fire extinguisher or an emergency light that has burned out.



Make sure your apartment has working smoke alarms.

Have a smoke alarm inside each sleeping room. Test them every month. Replace the batteries every year. Tell your apartment manager if you think there is a problem with one of your smoke alarms.

Stay Calm

In the event of a fire, stay calm. Move to the exit as you have practiced. Call the fire department once you are outside.

- If your door feels warm to the touch, do not attempt to open it. Call 9-1-1 and tell the dispatcher your apartment number and that you can't open your door.
- Stuff the cracks around the door with towels, rags, bedding, or tape. Cover vents.
- Wait at a window and signal for help with a flashlight or by waving a white cloth.
- If your apartment door is cool to the touch, open it slowly. Stay low and check for smoke or fire in the hallway. If the hallway is safe, follow your building's evacuation plan.
- Never use an elevator to escape a fire. Always use the stairs.

Be Prepared

Create an escape plan. Discuss how you will get outside. Practice your plan.

- Count the number of doors there are between your apartment and the nearest fire exit. Memorize the number in case you have to find the exit in the dark.
- Know where all the exit doors and stairs are on your floor.
- Learn your building evacuation plan if you have one. Create and practice an escape plan for your own apartment.

Wait Outside for the Fire Department

Once you are outside, move away from the building. Give firefighters and fire trucks plenty of space.

- Stay outside. Do not go back inside for any reason.
- If you think someone is still inside, tell firefighters where you think they are.
- Wait until firefighters tell you it's safe to go back inside.