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PROGRAM GUIDANCE

PROGRAM: Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG)

FOR: Tribal Government Leaders and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHE)

R.B.

FROM: Rodger Boyd, Deputy Assistant Secretary, PN

TOPIC: Fire Safety

Purpose: The purpose of this Guidance is to provide clarification on the applicability of the fire alarm and automatic sprinkler installation requirements to federally funded programs.

References: Fire Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-522); Notice PIH 99-11, Fire Safety; and Guide for the Implementation of P.L. 102-522 for Fire Alarm and Automatic Sprinkler Installations.

Background: On February 17, 1999, the Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) issued Notice PIH 99-11 (HA) outlining the provisions of the Fire Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-522) as they apply to public and Indian housing. The Notice expired on February 28, 2000. While PIH never extended the notice, the information provided in the notice remains in effect and is reprinted below in a condensed format for your information.

In September 1995, the Department issued a Guide for the Implementation of P.L. 102-522 for Fire Alarm and Automatic Sprinkler Installations (The Guide). The Guide provides both general and detailed information regarding the implementation of P.L. 102-522 pertaining to the installation of fire alarm and automatic sprinkler systems. It can still be obtained from HUD User by calling 1-800-245-2691 or on-line at: <http://www.huduser.org/publications/destech/hudguide.html>.

Applicability: The Act, the Notice, the Guide and this Program Guidance apply to both Indian housing assisted under NAHASDA and 1937 Act assisted housing. The Guide addresses three provisions of the Act affecting HUD-assisted housing: (1) four-story or higher buildings that have been constructed after October 26, 1992, must be protected with an automatic sprinkler system and hard-wired smoke detectors; (2) rebuilt, four-

story or higher multifamily buildings that are rebuilt after October 1, 1994, must be in compliance with Chapter 1 of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101, the “Life Safety Code” which includes requirements such as hard-wired smoke detectors, automatic sprinkler systems, egress systems, emergency lighting, etc.; and (3) **all other dwelling units** receiving housing assistance must be protected by hard-wired or battery-operated smoke detectors installed in compliance with NFPA 72.

Basic Requirements: Smoke Detectors: Where battery operated smoke detectors are permitted, the removal of batteries from smoke detectors by residents is a serious problem which should, to the extent authorized under the lease, be treated as a lease violation and appropriate action taken against the resident on a case-by-case basis. Consideration should be given to the replacement of battery operated smoke detectors in existing units with hard-wired detectors whenever possible, such as, when other wiring upgrades occur in a unit or if wall finishes are being replaced.

Sprinkler System Inspections: In those properties required to have sprinkler systems, owners should ensure that the sprinkler systems are designed, installed, maintained and inspected to assure proper operation on all floors and in all spaces; require management follow-up on all properties to ensure that inspections are conducted; corrections needed are completed and that record keeping is maintained.

Self-Closing Doors: Self-closing doors are an effective method for slowing down the spread of a fire providing sometimes critical, life-saving time for fire and rescue personnel to do their job and allow individuals to escape the fire or be rescued. It is imperative that where such doors are in place or required that they are unobstructed and that the self-closing mechanisms are fully operational at all times. Such self-closing mechanisms should be included as a routine inspection item to ensure proper operation of the mechanism. Additionally, emergency egress doors in residential properties should never be locked from the inside barring emergency egress. The importance of the proper functioning of emergency doors should be addressed during regular, on-going resident fire safety education programs. In situations where the actions of a resident has caused either the mechanism of a self-closing door not to function or emergency egress doors have been locked from the inside, management should treat this as a violation of the lease and take appropriate action on a case-by-case basis.

Coordination with Fire Departments: Local Fire Department officials should be invited and encouraged to conduct pre-plan tours of all properties to ensure that responding emergency fire services are familiar with the building’s layout, operations, key personnel, occupant mix (elderly, families, disabled, etc.) and built-in fire and emergency equipment. Although fire-fighting tactics may vary from fire to fire, fires in high-rise structures are extremely dangerous and require a very precise delivery of resources, coordinated attack, sufficient water supply and evacuation of residents. Issues such as the diameter of the hose, minimum amount of fire hose needed to reach a given area and locations of water supply connections can become critical for fire incident commanders, therefore, it is essential that pre-planning visits and coordination be done before a fire occurs.

Fire Safety Inspections: Property owners are responsible for ensuring that all fire protection systems and features are always in operating order in accordance with local/State codes, which typically reference the NFPA standards. Where applicable by local code recipients should ensure that appropriate responsible local officials conduct required inspections, ensuring that code violations (or

suggested improvements) are being appropriately addressed. Some of the primary standards affecting the fire safety, maintenance and operation of properties are found in the following National Fire Protection Association documents: NFPA 10, fire Extinguishers; NFPA 14, Standpipe Systems; NFPA 25, Sprinkler Systems; NFPA 72, Fire Alarm Systems; and NFPA 101, Emergency Exits/Lighting. To obtain these standards, contact the NFPA at 1-800-344-3555, or at their website at: <http://www.nfpa.org/Home/index.asp>

Evacuation Plan: Recipients should ensure that there is a viable evacuation plan in effect that has been developed in consultation with local/State Fire Officials and ensure that residents, staff and the Fire Department are aware of the evacuation plan through ongoing Fire Safety Programs. Recipients should confer with local/State Fire Officials to plan and schedule recommended fire drills for their properties to test the effectiveness of evacuation plans and ensure that all involved are familiar with evacuation procedures. Such procedures should address a variety of occupancy types and buildings. For example, special procedures and training will need to be developed, in conjunction with local/State officials, for buildings that house primarily elderly persons including those with mobility problems, disabled persons and or families with children.

Fire Safety Training: Recipients should ensure that residents are provided information and training on how to prevent fires and what to do in the event of a fire including information for residents of multi-story buildings on what to do when a fire occurs and techniques for surviving a fire. Such information should be provided to all new residents upon leasing a unit. This information and training can be provided by local/State Fire Officials. Training for residents and staff should be conducted on a regular, recurring basis – at least once each year. It is recommended that each year recipients hold a “Fire Safety Awareness Day,” coinciding with National Fire Prevention Week. A hotline for reporting fire safety violations could also be established.

Determining the Required Protection: Table I.2, Required Levels of Alarm and Sprinkler Protection, reprinted below from the Guide can be used to identify the minimum level of alarm and sprinkler protection required for HUD-assisted housing units.

Table I.2 Required Levels of Alarm and Sprinkler Protection

HUD Property Category	Required Protection	
	Detection/Alarm	Automatic Sprinklers
I. Newly Constructed Multifamily		
4 stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smoke detectors in dwelling units • alarm/pull boxes throughout building* • sprinkler water flow connected to alarm system 	Complete coverage**
> 4 stories	(same as for 4 stories)	Complete coverage**
II. Rebuilt Multifamily		
Option 1 (NFPA 101, Ch 19)	None	None
Option 2 (NFPA 101, Ch 19)	(same as for Newly Constructed) and complete smoke detector coverage	None
Option 3 (NFPA 101, Ch 19)		
4 stories	(same as for Newly Constructed)*	
5 or 6 stories	(same as for Newly Constructed)*	
Option 4 (NFPA 101, Ch 19)	(same as for Newly Constructed)*	Complete coverage**
> 6 stories		
III. Other Dwelling Units		
Newly Constructed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single/multiple station smoke detectors • outside sleeping areas • on each "level" • within each sleeping room • hard-wired and interconnected 	None
Existing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single/multiple station smoke detectors • outside sleeping areas • on each level • battery or hard-wired • clearly audible or interconnected 	None

*Requirements vary depending on fire resistance and egress features.

** For buildings in New York City, the automatic sprinklers may be omitted if an engineering analysis demonstrates that an alternative design or system (which may include sprinklers) achieves a level of life safety of the building occupants, equal to or greater than that provided by the sprinklers. The required engineering analysis must be performed in accordance with guidelines established by the General Services Administration which are included in this Guide in Appendix B.

Resources:

U.S. Fire Administration
 Federal Emergency Management Agency
 16825 South Seaton Avenue
 Emmitsburg, Maryland 2172
 Tel: (301) 447-1000
<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/>

National Fire Protection Association
 1 Batterymarch Park
 Quincy, Massachusetts 02269-9101
 Tel: (617) 770-3000
<http://www.nfpa.org/Home/index.asp>

Inquiries: If you have any questions regarding this Program Guidance, please contact your Area Office of Native American Programs.