

City of Saint Paul Truth-in-Sale of Housing Program

10 Most Common Deficiencies Identified in a Truth-in-Sale of Housing Disclosure Report

This handout is designed to better prepare the potential sellers, buyers and the marketing agents on common hazardous conditions that exist in single family, duplex, townhouse and condominium dwelling units. Because these items are listed so frequently in a Truth-in-Sale of Housing Disclosure Report, it is our intent to inform homeowners of these commonly reported items prior to an evaluation of their property. Sellers may choose to correct hazardous item(s) prior to their Truth-in-Sale of Housing inspection and would thereby be able to prevent these hazardous items from appearing on the Disclosure Report that is required to be displayed when the property is being offered for sale.

The Truth-in-Sale of Housing Program in Saint Paul is disclosure, only. None of the conditions described in this informational flyer are required to be corrected or repaired, by the City of Saint Paul, except for the Hard-Wired Smoke Detector law, Chapter 58 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code. However, all the conditions described herein are commonly considered hazardous and likely to cause injury to a person or property if not corrected. All sellers, buyers and marketing agents should be aware that other public or private agencies, lenders and insurers may have their own requirements concerning the correction of hazards identified through the Truth-in-Sale of Housing Disclosure Report.

1. Smoke Detector(s): The installation of smoke detectors in locations required by model building codes has dramatically reduced the number of deaths and injuries due to fire. The Saint Paul Legislative Code, Chapter 58, enforced by the Saint Paul Fire Department, Division of Fire Prevention, is Saint Paul's smoke detector law. If you are selling your single-family home, you **must** have a 120 volt hard-wired battery back-up smoke detector installed within 60 days after notice from the Fire Department in order to satisfy the ordinance. Contact that office at 651-228-6230 for complete information. Smoke detectors are also required in duplexes, townhouses and condominiums, though they are not required to be hard-wired.

Only one detector, mounted in the hallway outside the bedrooms, is required to satisfy the ordinance. Additional detectors increase your level of safety, but are not mandatory. Installation of a hard-wired battery back-up smoke detector requires an electrical permit issued by the Office of License, Inspections, and Environmental Protection (LIEP). Contact LIEP at 651-266-9090.

2. Electrical Fixtures and Cover Plates: Outlets and junction boxes with missing, loose, or damaged cover plates are hazards that can easily be fixed.

3. Backflow Prevention Devices: Protection of potable (safe to drink) water for inhabitants of a dwelling (and also the city water supply) is of great importance. In most cases, a hazardous water supply condition can be corrected by adding an anti-siphon backflow prevention device to the water supply.

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(backflow prevention devices, continued)

Common locations where a backflow prevention device is required are:

- a. Outside the house, garden hose connections.
- b. Laundry tubs with a threaded faucet for a hose connection, and a hose is connected
- c. Hand-held shower sprayers that could hang into tub water.

Other common locations include toilet ballcocks that are not located above the tank water line, any faucet that discharges below the spill line of its receptor, and lawn irrigation systems having improper backflow protection.

4. **Basement bathrooms/laundry tubs:** Many of these installations have been done illegally and are not properly vented. Correction of this hazard will require a **plumbing permit** from LIEP.
5. **Improper dryer vent:** All domestic dryers must be vented to the outside. The vent must be of smooth metal. A section of flexible metal is permissible if it is less than 6 ft long.
6. **Electrical ground:** Electrical systems must be properly grounded. One of the areas where grounding is required (and many times omitted) is around the water meter. A #6 wire (a #4 wire if electrical service is 150 amp or greater) is required to be attached to the house side of the water meter with an approved clamp, and also to the street side of the water meter with an approved clamp. Current code also requires a ground wire directly to/from the service panel.
7. **Unapproved flexible gas appliance connectors and valves, and uncapped gas lines:** All gas fired appliances are connected by one of three methods: A soft copper tubing with flared fittings, rigid piping connected directly to the appliance, or flexible connectors. Approved (stainless steel) flexible gas connectors must be listed to the American National Standards Institute Standard No. Z21.24 or A21.45. Unapproved flexible connectors have the potential of rupturing and spilling of gas. Unused gas lines must be removed or capped with the appropriate plug and sealant.
8. **Furnace not properly operating:** The presence of scale on burners or bottom of burner compartment, flame distortion with the blower motor running, discoloration of the upper cover panel, and rust and/or discoloration of the draft hood are all indications that the furnace is not operating properly and that the appliance needs repair and/or maintenance.
9. **Water Heater:** Common hazards reported on water heaters include improper location or installation, improperly located or missing pressure relief valve, temperature and pressure relief valve piping that is plugged or capped. Indications of problems with the water heater include rust holes, a backpitch, open or improperly sealed joints, backdrafting, and evidence of spillage.
10. **Garage door openers/Extension cord wiring:** Many garage door openers are plugged into extension cords instead of into an approved outlet. Other appliances which should not be connected to extension cords are water softeners, window air conditioners, washing machines, clothes dryers, sump pumps and other “permanent” appliances. An **electrical permit** is required to install new electrical outlet(s).