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Dear Section 8 Landlord:

In response to a growing concern regarding injuries and deaths from fires, the Department Of Housing and Urban Development issues regulations in 1992 regarding smoke detectors. These regulations modify the Housing Quality Standards, which are the minimum conditions to which you are contractually committed to maintaining your units that are assisted through the Section 8 program.

The regulations require that there be operable **smoke detectors on every level** of the assisted units, including basements but excluding crawl spaces and unfinished attics. "To the extent practicable", the smoke detectors should be located in a hallway adjacent to bedroom areas. If a hearing-impaired person or persons occupy the unit, each bedroom used by such a person must be equipped with a visual alarm connected to the smoke detector installed in the adjacent hallway. New construction requires a smoke detector in each sleeping room and must be arranged so that the operation of any detector will cause all detectors to alarm. Smoke detectors can be either battery-operated or hard-wired.

While Washington state statutes require tenants to maintain the batteries in the smoke detectors during a tenancy, **HUD regulations make landlords responsible for "installing, inspecting, and replacing the batteries"**. HUD has advised us that this means that through your Housing Assistance Payment contract, you assume this responsibility, despite our state law. HUD indicates that tenants have a responsibility to refrain from tampering with the detectors and to ensure the batteries are kept in place. They should also be responsible for informing a landlord of any problems with the smoke detector(s), including the failure of the batteries.

Please review the number and location of your smoke detector(s) to be sure that you comply with these regulations. Special attention to any units occupied by hearing-impaired residents is essential. Finally, you will need to adopt procedures to periodically inspect units to ensure the batteries and the smoke detector(s) are operating properly.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any question regarding this change.

Sincerely,

*Sandra Back*

Sandra Back  
Director, Section 8