

How to Maintain Safety and Compliance in a Low-Staff or No-Staff Condo Building

Property managers in every city are constantly being asked to do more with fewer resources. They're being asked to work with very tight budgets, and in more and more cases, they're being asked to operate with a very small staff or no staff at all.

In the past, it was very common for superintendents to live on-site at the condo building. They were always there and always accessible. And they often had full-time security and cleaning staff to help them maintain a strong fire safety culture.

That scenario is growing increasingly less common as condo corporations can't really afford that arrangement anymore. Now, a building supervisor may only be on-site 2 or 3 days a week. And in smaller buildings, they often don't have any sort of security staff at all.

This poses two huge challenges:

1. Managing 'The Other 50%' of Your Safety & Compliance

Managers are often surprised to learn that their fire service companies [only take care of 50% of their fire safety tasks](#). *The Other 50%* is up to them.

This can include everything from making sure that all your doors latch properly, to ensuring no clutter or combustibles have accumulated, to clearing snow from key areas in the winter. This also includes ensuring all of your activities are documented properly and ensuring the fire safety plan is up-to-date.

If you're only on-site 2 or 3 days a week, how can you manage all of that while also seeing to all your other duties? Can you get your security staff (if you have one) or cleaning staff to take on some of these duties?

2. During an Emergency Situation

If there is no superintendent living on site, the fire department responding to a fire in the middle of the night won't have someone readily available to hand them keys, bring them the fire safety plan, and be prepared with an emergency list.

This can make an already very stressful situation even worse for everyone involved.

A lot of buildings may attempt to download a number of these responsibilities to their security company. However, it's important to know that not all security companies are set up to handle this demand.

For example, we're dealing with a notice of violation for a building with no superintendent right now. It's a very big building and the staff is contracted. They're actually changing their security company because of how poorly that company responded to fire emergencies and other security emergencies in the building.

They're finding that not having someone on-site and 100% responsible for that building is a challenge, but that's the hand they've been dealt. They've realized (the hard way, unfortunately) that they need a more comprehensive and sustainable approach.

What's the Solution?

If you're in a situation like the one described above, the solution is to be very careful who you offload these responsibilities to. And do so from the very start.

If you're going to hand some of the tasks to your fire alarm service company, ensure that these tasks fall within their area of expertise and certification. And most importantly, make sure you know who is going to take care of everything else they cannot do.

If you're going to outsource these tasks to your cleaning company or security company, make sure that they have a proven history of doing these tasks correctly and thoroughly for other buildings. They also need to be trained on how to carry them out in your specific building and document everything that is done.

Not all companies do this, and sadly, the ones that do often cost a little bit more. However, this is money well invested! You're investing in your resident's safety and giving yourself the peace of mind of knowing that everything is being done correctly. It can also take a lot of time-consuming tasks off of your plate.

Most importantly, if you have a series of service companies managing different aspects of your fire safety (for example, some combination of fire alarm service company, cleaning company, and security company) someone needs to oversee all of these moving parts to ensure that everything is being done, and being documented.

Keeping up with changes to the fire code and the various parts of your own safety culture can be daunting. It's a challenge if you're a superintendent managing a single building, and even more difficult if you're a manager in charge of several properties. But the good news is that there are companies that can help!

A Fire Code Expert can help you manage this entire process to carry out your crucial fire safety/fire code compliance tasks, even if your building has strained budgets, low-staff or no-staff constraints.

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