

# Seattle Fire Prevention Division

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## Requirements and Exemptions Related to Testing and Maintenance of Fire Alarms and Sprinklers in Townhouses

### What Is a Townhouse and a Townhouse Unit?

A **townhouse** is a building that contains three or more attached townhouse units. A **townhouse unit** is a single-family dwelling unit in a townhouse that extends from foundation to roof and that has a yard or public way on not less than two sides that extends at least 50 percent of the length of each of these two sides.

### Testing and Maintenance Requirements for Fire Protection Systems in Townhouses in Seattle

- Like one- and two-family dwellings, some townhouses do not have fire alarms or sprinkler systems. Other townhouses are required to have these systems based on the number of units or number of stories in the townhouse.
- If you own or live in a townhouse that has a sprinkler system and/or fire alarms, please be aware that those systems need to be tested and maintained each year. Failure to do so is a violation of the [Seattle Fire Code](#) (SFC) (see 2018 SFC 901.6 and Table 901.6.1 and SFD [Administrative Rule 9.02](#)).
  - Exception relevant for townhouses: Some sprinkler systems do not require annual testing. These are “NFPA 13D” or “P2904” systems. The [building permit](#) that was issued when your building was constructed will document what type of sprinkler system is stalled in your townhouse.

### Who is Responsible for Ensuring Fire Alarm and Sprinkler Testing in the Townhouse?

- The Seattle Fire Code makes the building owner responsible for complying with the code, including testing and maintenance requirements.
- In a townhouse, if a single system serves multiple units, then the various owners of the townhouse units should work together to comply with the code.

### Who is Allowed to Perform Testing and Maintenance on Fire Protection Systems?

- Sprinklers: In one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses with the 13D or P2904 sprinkler types, the building owner may perform maintenance. Other sprinkler systems of types 13 or 13R must be tested and maintained by an [SFD-certified](#) sprinkler technician.
- Fire Alarms: Must be tested and maintained by an [SFD-certified](#) fire alarm technician.

### Do I Have to File Any Reports with the Seattle Fire Department Regarding Testing and Maintenance?

- No, reports for required testing or maintenance do not need to be submitted to SFD for one- or two-family residential dwellings, or any townhouses. This reporting exemption is provided for all fire protection and life safety systems, including fire alarms and sprinklers of all categories (NFPA 13, 13R, and 13D), in townhouses and one- and two-family dwellings.
- However, you must maintain records of any testing, maintenance and repairs that occurred, and provide them to our inspectors upon request.