



## **PRESS RELEASE**

AUGUST 14, 2009 11:30 P.M.

CONTACT: KYLE FOREMAN, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER  
509-771-0875 / kforeman@co.grant.wa.us

### **SMOKE ALARMS IN RENTAL PROPERTIES: *What tenants and landlords need to know***

**MOSES LAKE (AUGUST 14, 2009)** – The fire-related deaths of a mother and her two small children in Mattawa on August 12 are a reminder to all citizens about the importance of working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are important for all dwellings, and are required in rental properties.

Whether a rented house or apartment, landlords are required by Washington State law to provide tenants with a working smoke alarm. Tenants have the responsibility of maintaining the smoke alarm provided by the landlord. A working smoke alarm doubles one's chances of surviving a fire in their home or apartment.

#### **Responsibilities of Landlords** [Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Section 212-10-045]

- Install working smoke alarms as required by code and following the manufacturers instructions.
- Buildings constructed prior to 1980 may have battery powered alarms installed. Smoke alarms installed in buildings constructed since 1980 should receive their primary power source from building wiring.
- All smoke alarms should carry the approval of Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) Testing Laboratories.
- Inspect and test alarms when a unit becomes vacant. Smoke alarms should be repaired or replaced before the rental unit is reoccupied.
- Instruct tenants on the purpose, operation and maintenance of the devices. Provide written notice to tenants describing their responsibility to maintain smoke alarms.

#### **Responsibilities of Tenants** [WAC 212-10-050]

- Maintain smoke alarms in good working order. This involves testing the detector monthly according to the manufacturer's instructions, as well as regularly cleaning the alarm with a vacuum.
- If the smoke alarm is battery operated, the tenant is responsible for replacing the battery once each year using the battery type listed on the alarm.

Landlords should be aware of this legal requirement and supply tenants with the necessary smoke alarms as soon as possible. Smoke alarms can be purchased at hardware and variety stores for less than \$10 per piece.

For further assistance, citizens can call the Washington State Attorney General's Office Consumer Line at 1-800-692-5086. You can either talk to an operator or listen to recorded messages.

###