



CODE SUMMARY

RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY FOR THE ELDERLY

A code summary is a compilation of code sections related to a specific topic and does not contain any interpretations or District standards. This code summary lists sections of code pertaining to Residential Care Facility for the Elderly and puts them into simple, easy to understand language. The bold headings are intended to be straightforward and uncomplicated. Under each heading you will find the correlating code language and the reference cited. Please feel free to direct any questions to the Community Risk Reduction Division.

1. A bedridden client cannot be located on any floor except the first floor unless they are temporarily bedridden for less than 14 days.

In Group R-3.1 occupancies housing a bedridden client, the client sleeping room shall not be located above or below the first story.

Exception: Clients who become bedridden as a result of a temporary illness as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 1566.45, 1568.0832 and 1569.72. A temporary illness is an illness, which persists for 14 days or less. (California Building Code 435.3.2)

2. For houses without fire sprinklers; the walls shared with the garage and house must be in good condition with no unsealed penetrations. The door from the house to the garage must self close and latch.

The private garage shall be separated from the dwelling unit and its attic area by means of gypsum board, not less than ½ inch in thickness, applied to the garage side. Garages beneath habitable rooms shall be separated from all habitable rooms above by not less than a 5/8-inch Type X gypsum board or equivalent and ½-inch gypsum board applied to structures supporting the separation from habitable rooms above the garage. Door openings between a private garage and the dwelling unit shall be equipped with either solid wood doors or solid or honeycomb core steel doors not less than 1 3/8 inches in thickness, or doors in compliance with Section 716.5.3 with a fire protection rating of not less than 20 minutes. Doors shall be self-closing and self-latching. (California Building Code 406.3.2.1)

3. All houses must have a minimum of two exits.

Group R-3.1 occupancies shall have a minimum of two exits. Yard gates blocking exit paths to the street must also comply with the requirements for exit doors in width and locking hardware unless an approved area of refuse has been provided (California Building Code 435.8.2.1)

4. Care homes housing non-ambulatory clients must provide exiting from the sleeping rooms either by (1) exiting into a hallway and then into a close bedroom with approved exiting to the exterior; (2) exiting into a hallway with a direct exit to the exterior; (3) exiting from the bedroom directly to the exterior; (4) exiting through an adjoining bedroom with a direct exit to the exterior. If options 1 or 2 are used then a self closing solid wood door at least 1 3/8 inches thick must be installed closing off the hallway from the rest of the house.

In a Group R-3.1 occupancy, bedrooms used by non-ambulatory clients shall have access to at least one of the required exits which shall conform to one of the following:

- a. Egress through a hallway or area into a bedroom in the immediate area which has an exit directly to the exterior and the corridor/hallway is constructed consistent with the dwelling unit interior

walls. The hallway shall be separated from common areas by a solid wood door not less than 1 3/8 inch in thickness, maintained self-closing or shall be automatic closing by actuation of a smoke detector installed in accordance with Section 716.5.9.

- b. Egress through a hallway which has an exit directly to the exterior. The hallway shall be separated from the rest of the house by a wall constructed consistent with the dwelling unit interior walls and opening protected by a solid wood door not less than 1 3/8 inch in thickness, maintained self-closing or shall be automatic closing by actuation of a smoke detector installed in accordance with Section 716.5.9.
- c. Direct exit from the bedroom to the exterior shall be of a size as to permit the installation of a door not less than 3 feet in width and not less than 6 feet 8 inches in height. When installed, doors shall be capable of opening at least 90 degrees and shall be so mounted that the clear width of the exit way is not less than 32 inches.
- d. Egress through an adjoining bedroom which exits to the exterior. (California Building Code 435.8.3.2)

5. Care homes housing one bedridden client without an automatic sprinkler system must have a direct exit to the exterior from the client sleeping room. The exterior door must be operable from both the inside and outside. The interior bedroom door must be a self-closing 1 3/8 inch solid wood door with a smoke gasket and cannot contain any locks. Both doors must be at least 3 feet in width and 6 feet 8 inches in height.

In Group R-3.1 occupancies housing a bedridden client and not provided with an approved automatic sprinkler system, all of the following shall apply:

- 1. In Group R-3.1 occupancies housing a bedridden client, a direct exit to the exterior of the residence shall be provided from the client sleeping room.
- 2. Doors to a bedridden client's sleeping room shall be of a self-closing, positive latching 1 3/8 inch solid wood door. Such doors shall be provided with a gasket so installed as to provide a seal where the door meets the jam on both sides and across the top. Doors shall be maintained self-closing or shall be automatic closing by actuation of a smoke alarm in accordance with Section 716.5.9.
- 3. Group R-3.1 occupancies housing a bedridden client, shall not have a night latch, dead bolt, security chain or any similar locking device installed on any interior door leading from a bedridden client's sleeping room to any interior area such as a corridor, hallway and or general use areas of the residence in accordance with Chapter 10.
- 4. The exterior exit door to a bedridden client's sleeping room shall be operable from both the interior and exterior of the residence.
- 5. Every required exit doorway from a bedridden client sleeping room shall be of a size as to permit the installation of a door not less than 3 feet in width and not less than 6 feet 8 inches in height. When installed in exit doorways, exit doors shall be capable of opening at least 90 degrees and shall be so mounted that the clear width of the exit way is not less than 32 inches.

Note: A sliding glass door can be used as an exterior exit doorway as long as it is operable from the inside and outside and the clear width of the exit way is not less than 32 inches. (California Building Code 435.8.3.3)

6. An exit cannot pass through more than one room and cannot pass through kitchens, storerooms, closets, garages or similar spaces.

A means of exit shall not pass through more than one intervening room. A means of egress shall not pass through kitchens, storerooms, closets, garages or spaces used for similar purposes.

Exception: Kitchens which do not form separate rooms by construction. (California Building Code 435.8.3.4)

7. Care homes housing non-ambulatory clients can have changes in floor elevations up to ¼ of an inch without any treatments. Changes in level between ¼ inch and ½ inch have to be beveled with a slope of 50 percent or less. Any changes in level over ½ of an inch must have a ramp.

In Group R-3.1 occupancies housing nonambulatory clients interior changes in level up to 0.25 inch may be vertical and without edge treatment. Changes in level between 0.25 inch and 0.5 inch shall be beveled with a slope no greater than 1 unit vertical in 2 units horizontal (50 percent slope). Changes in level greater than 0.5 inch shall be accomplished by means of a ramp. (California Building Code 435.8.5)

8. Exit doors must be recognizable as exit doors and cannot be covered by mirrors, drapery or decorations.

Means of egress doors shall be readily distinguishable from the adjacent construction and finishes such that the doors are easily recognizable as doors. Mirrors or similar reflecting materials shall not be used on means of egress doors. Means of egress doors shall not be concealed by curtains, drapes, decorations or similar materials. (California Fire Code 1010.1)

9. Emergency and escape windows are required in all sleeping rooms. Size must be 5 square feet of clear opening at ground level and 5.7 square feet of clear opening on other floors. The minimum height of the normal opening is 24 inches and the width is 20 inches.

In addition to the means of egress required by this chapter, provisions shall be made for emergency escape and rescue openings in Group R occupancies. Basements and sleeping rooms below the fourth story above grade plane shall have at least one exterior emergency escape and rescue opening in accordance with this section. (California Fire Code 1030.2)

Emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet. Exception: The minimum net clear opening for grade-floor emergency escape and rescue openings shall be 5 square feet. (California Fire Code 1030.3.1)

The minimum net clear opening height dimensions shall be 24 inches. The minimum net clear opening width dimension shall be 20 inches. The net clear opening dimensions shall be the result of normal operation of the opening. (California Fire Code 1030.3.2)

10. Address numbers of residence should be plainly visible from the street.

New and existing buildings shall be provided with approved address identification. The address identification shall be legible and placed in a position that is visible from the street or road fronting the property. Address identification characters shall contrast with their background. (California Fire Code 505.1)

11. Fire sprinklers are not required in care homes if ambulatory clients are not housed above the second floor, and nonambulatory clients are not housed above the first floor and there is no more than one bedridden client.

An automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section 903.3 shall be provided throughout all buildings with a Group R fire area.

Exceptions:

1. Existing Group R-3 occupancies converted to Group R-3.1 occupancies not housing bedridden clients, not housing nonambulatory clients above the first floor, and not housing clients above the second floor.
2. Existing Group R-3 occupancies converted to Group R-3.1 occupancies housing only one bedridden client and complying with Section 435.8.3.3 of the California Building Code. (California Fire Code 903.2.8)

12. Smoke alarms are required in hallways outside sleeping rooms, in each sleeping room, on each level of the home and in all habitable areas except the kitchen.

Single- or multiple-station smoke alarms shall be installed and maintained in Groups R-2, R-2.1, R-3, R-3.1 and R-4 regardless of occupant load at all of the following locations:

1. On the ceiling or wall outside each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms.
2. In each room used for sleeping purposes.
3. In each story within a dwelling unit, including basements but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics. In dwellings or dwelling units with split levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level.
4. In a Group R-3.1 occupancies, in addition to the above, smoke alarms shall be provided throughout the habitable areas of the dwelling unit except kitchens. (California Fire Code 907.2.11.2)

13. Any care home housing a bedridden client must have smoke alarms that receive their power from the electrical circuit of the home. Alarms must have a battery back up and must be interconnected (if one alarm sounds, they all sound).

In all facilities housing a bedridden client, smoke alarms shall receive their primary power from the building wiring when such wiring is served from a commercial source and shall be equipped with a battery backup. Smoke alarms shall be electrically interconnected so as to cause all smoke alarms to sound a distinctive alarm signal upon actuation of any single smoke alarm. Such alarm signal shall be audible throughout the facility at a minimal level of 15 db above ambient noise level. These devices need not be interconnected to any other fire alarm device, have a control panel, or be electrically supervised or provided with emergency power. (California Fire Code 907.2.11.2.3)

14. If more than one smoke alarm needs to be installed, then all smoke alarms must be interconnected (if one alarm sounds, they all sound).

Where more than one smoke alarm is required to be installed within an individual dwelling unit or sleeping unit in Group R occupancies, the smoke alarms shall be interconnected in such a manner that the activation of one alarm will activate all of the alarms in the individual unit. Physical interconnection of smoke alarms shall not be required where listed wireless alarms are installed and all alarms sound upon activation of one alarm. The alarm shall be clearly audible in all bedrooms over background noise levels with all intervening doors closed. (California Fire Code 907.2.11.5)

15. All newly classified care homes must have all smoke alarms receive their power from the electrical circuit of the home. The alarms must also have a battery backup.

In new construction and in newly classified Group R-3.1 occupancies, required smoke alarms shall receive their primary power from the building wiring where such wiring is served from a commercial source and shall be equipped with a battery backup. Smoke alarms with integral strobes that are not equipped with battery back-up shall be connected to an emergency electrical system in accordance with Section 604. Smoke alarms shall emit a signal when the batteries are low. Wiring shall be permanent and without a disconnecting switch other than as required for overcurrent protection. (California Fire Code 907.2.11.6)

16. Care homes which have clients who are hearing impaired must have smoke alarms with visual notification devices.

Protective social care facilities which house persons who are hearing impaired, shall be provided with notification appliances for the hearing impaired installed in accordance with NFPA 72 and which shall activate upon initiation of the fire alarm system or the smoke alarms. (California Fire Code 907.5.2.3.4)

17. Each care home shall have a fire extinguisher rated at 2A:10B:C. Extinguisher must be mounted in an accessible location and be serviced annual and immediately after any use.

Portable fire extinguishers shall be installed in new and existing Group A, B, E, F, H, I, L, M, R-1, R-2, R-2.1, R-3.1, R-4, and S occupancies. Minimum rating of 2A:10B:C is required. (California Fire Code 906.1)

18. All oxygen tanks used by clients or in storage need to be secured at all times to prevent falling and/or damage.

Compressed gas containers, cylinders, tanks and systems shall be secured against accidental dislodgement and against access by unauthorized personnel. (California Fire Code 5303.5)

19. Extension cords should only be used when operating portable power units for a short period of time.

Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be a substitute for permanent wiring. Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors or floor coverings, nor shall such cords be subject to environmental damage or physical impact. Extension cords shall be used only with portable appliances. (California Fire Code 603.6)