

# Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO)

Improving and preserving safe and healthy housing for all Seattle renters

## Frequently Asked Questions



### 1. What is the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) program?

The RRIO program was established by the Seattle City Council in 2014 to ensure that all rental housing in Seattle is safe and meets basic housing maintenance requirements. Rental property owners in Seattle must register their properties with the City. Inspectors will make sure all registered properties comply with minimum housing and safety standards at least once every 5-10 years. The program will benefit Seattle residents by:

- Preserving neighborhoods and quality of life
- Educating property owners, inspectors, and renters about the RRIO standards and encouraging proper maintenance of rental housing
- Ensuring all rental properties meet the same minimum standards through periodic inspections
- Creating clear communication methods between rental property owners and the City in the event of emergencies

### 2. What types of rentals need to be registered with the RRIO program?

Rental properties (with a few exceptions) must be registered with the RRIO program. This includes multi-family apartment buildings, single family homes for rent, boarding houses, fraternity/sorority houses, micro-housing facilities, floating on-water residences for rent and vacation home rentals that are not owner-occupied. There are some exceptions such as hotels, nursing homes, religious housing, government housing, or emergency housing. If you are unsure of your property's applicability with the program, call the RRIO Helpline at 206-684-4110 or refer to [www.seattle.gov/RRIO](http://www.seattle.gov/RRIO).

### 3. How do I register my property?

Rental registration and renewals are accepted online or by mailed-in paper application. Registrations are required to be renewed every two years. Check the RRIO website for more information: [www.seattle.gov/RRIO](http://www.seattle.gov/RRIO).

### 4. What does it cost to register my property?

Your rental registration is valid for two years. Beginning January 2024, the fee is \$110 for each property including the first rental unit, plus \$20 for each additional unit. Fees are subject to future changes. See the example below:

Number of Rental Housing Units	Base Fee + Unit Fee	Total for Five Years
1	\$110 + \$0	\$110
2	\$110 + \$20	\$130
20	\$110 + \$380	\$490

A 5% technology fee is added to RRIO fees. Online payment can be made by credit or debit card. If you pay by check, you will need to fill out and submit a paper registration form available at [www.seattle.gov/RRIO](http://www.seattle.gov/RRIO) or you can register online and pay by check using this [instruction sheet](#). Checks should be made out to the *City of Seattle*.

[www.seattle.gov/RRIO](http://www.seattle.gov/RRIO)



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Construction & Inspections

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### 5. Do I need to renew my registration?

Your rental registration is valid for two years and must be renewed at the end of each two-year period. The renewal process requires property owners to verify or update contact and property information, declare that all units meet minimum housing standards, and pay the renewal fee. The RRIO program sends out reminder letters and emails as each property's renewal due date approaches.

### 6. When will my property be inspected? How often will my property be inspected?

All properties, but not all units, will be inspected at least once every ten years after they register. There is a 10 percent chance the property will be chosen a second time within the following five years for a reinspection. The percentage of units to be inspected depends on the number of units on a property. Properties with multiple units require an inspection of 20 percent of the units and the exterior and common areas. Properties are randomly selected or may be selected because of past rental housing violations.

RRIO will issue a notice of inspection to the owner in advance of the required inspection. The property owner will have at least a 60-day window to complete and pass the RRIO inspection. Property owners will receive a RRIO Certificate of Compliance after the property passes the RRIO Checklist inspection. The Certificate of Compliance must be completed by the inspection due date or enforcement action may be taken by the City.

### 7. What are the criteria being used for inspections? What are you looking for?

The items which are being evaluated in the inspection are detailed on the RRIO Checklist. The RRIO Checklist is a subset of the City of Seattle Housing and Building Maintenance Code, and focuses on basic life, health, and safety concerns. The RRIO Checklist can be found on the program website at [www.seattle.gov/RRIO](http://www.seattle.gov/RRIO).

### 8. What if my rental unit is a floating on-water residence (FOWR)?

You must register your property with the RRIO program and will need to complete periodic inspections. There are a few things about FOWRs to consider regarding the RRIO inspection checklist standards. For example, many floating residences have toilet systems that differ from on-land plumbing that hooks up to the City sewer system. Your FOWR may have a composting toilet or a marine toilet that connects to a blackwater holding tank and is pumped out periodically. You should be prepared to provide your inspector documentation explaining how your toilet system works and showing that it is working as designed, such as installation records or manuals and other materials from the manufacturer. Your FOWR may have other features that differ from those found on a land-based structure. If you have questions about how your structure can meet RRIO checklist standards, please contact the RRIO Help Line at 206-684-4110 and ask to speak to an inspector for technical assistance.

### 9. What if I fail an inspection?

If an inspection fails a significant maintenance checklist item, this item must be repaired to meet the inspection requirement and a reinspection will also be required. Deficiencies may be noted through the inspection process and should be repaired but are not required in order to pass the RRIO inspection. Property owners should be aware that if a tenant were to later call and complain about non-mandatory items on the RRIO Checklist, they are required to be repaired under the Seattle Housing and Building Maintenance Code.

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The inspector will issue a RRIO Certificate of Compliance after the property passes the RRIO Checklist inspection. The owner must submit a RRIO Certificate of Compliance to the RRIO Program by the inspection due date. A RRIO inspector may extend the required inspection due date if a property owner is working in good faith to make the required repairs.

### **10. Can I move my tenants out to make repairs? Can I move my tenants out and make it a non-rentable unit?**

The City of Seattle Municipal Code requires “just cause” for eviction of tenants. A summary of valid reasons for which tenancy may be terminated is provided in [TIP 604](#). If you need to find housing for your current tenants, they may qualify for payment of relocation assistance (if low income) and advance notice of the planned development under the [City’s Tenant Relocation Ordinance](#).

### **11. I am renting a room in the house I live in. Do I need to register?**

If you are renting a room in the home or unit that you own, the property is considered owner-occupied and does not need to register. Renting a room generally means that you and your tenant share common living areas, the kitchen, and entryways. If you are renting a separate residential unit in your property, then you must register the unit. Separate units generally have their own kitchens, independent entryways, and the tenant has exclusive control over the living space. If you are unsure if your rental must register, you can call the RRIO Helpline at 206-684-4110 for further clarification.

### **12. I have a vacation rental. Do I need to register?**

Vacation rentals that are not the primary residential unit of the property owner must register. If you occasionally rent out your own home or rent out part of your home that is not a separate unit, then you do not need to register. If your vacation rental is a separate property or a separate unit on your property (such as an accessory dwelling unit), then you must register the unit with RRIO. You must also obtain a license from the Seattle Department of Financial and Administrative Services and follow a number of other rules. You can find more information at <http://www.seattle.gov/business-regulations/short-term-rentals>.

### **13. I want to become a private inspector for the RRIO Program. How do I do this?**

You must create a RRIO online user account, register with the program, pay the registration and training fee, and attend City-provided training. You can find a link to register, along with instructions at : [www.seattle.gov/RRIO](http://www.seattle.gov/RRIO). You may request a training session as part of your online registration. You must also hold a current City of Seattle business license and possess one of the following credentials:

- American Association of Code Enforcement Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector certification;
- International Code Council Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector certification;
- International Code Council Residential Building Inspector certification; or
- Washington State home inspector under RCW 18.280.

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