

CITY OF BATH, MAINE

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Local Bed & Breakfast Building and Fire Code Requirements

New bed and breakfasts are required to meet local and State fire code, and local building code requirements, as well as applicable zoning rules. The local building code is the 1996 BOCA National Building Code, with local amendments. The local fire code is the 1985 NFPA 101. The State fire code is the 2003 NFPA 101. For information on the State fire code requirements, contact the State Fire Marshal's office at 626-3880. For information on the local code requirements, contact the Bath Codes Office. State law requires all B&Bs that take in more than three guests to be provided with a fire sprinkler system, among other things. Below are summarized the local code requirements, based on the building being sprinklered and less than four stories in height. Each building is different, and these requirements are general. Contact the codes office for details/questions.

1. There must be at least two means of egress from each floor. There must be a primary means of escape from the guest sleeping rooms that does not require the occupants to be exposed to an unprotected vertical opening (such as stairwells, shafts, dumbwaiters, etc.) as the exit the building.
2. If a stairwell is part of the means of escape (which is usually the case), doors opening into the stairwell must be smoke resistant and self closing. It's acceptable to have the doors held open by mechanisms that release the door upon activation of the fire detection/suppression system(s).
3. The building must have a manual fire alarm, activated by pull stations at each exit door to the outside.
4. Each sleeping room must have a single station smoke detector, powered by the building's electrical system, and by a backup battery in it. If a guest room is a suite of rooms, any room in the path of egress from the sleeping room to the exit must also have a detector, interconnected with the one in the sleeping room.
5. Unless a guest sleeping room has a door to outside, it must have a window with a clear opening of at least 5.7 square feet, with a minimum width of 20" and a minimum height of 24" (note that 20" x 24" does not equal 5.7 square feet. These are minimum dimensions to ensure the usability of the window.), and a sill height of no more than 44" above the floor.
6. Each floor of the building must have a U.L.Listed fire extinguisher rated at least 2A-10 BC, located so that no point on that floor is more than 75' travel distance from an extinguisher. Extinguishers must be mounted in permanent locations, with the top of the extinguisher no more than 5' above the floor, and at least 4" of clear space beneath the extinguisher.

7. The means of egress (hallways, stairways leading to outside) must be provided with U.L.Listed emergency lighting equipment to light the means of egress in the event of a power failure.
8. No door in a means of egress can be less than 28" wide, except that bathroom doors can be as narrow as 24".
9. Closet doors must be openable from inside the closet.
10. Bathroom doors must be openable from outside the room in an emergency (such as if a child locks themselves in the bathroom).
11. Walls and doors between sleeping rooms and halls/stairways must be smoke resistant. There can be no louvers or open transoms in or over the doors.

This is a synopsis of the code requirements. The project must meet all applicable codes. The modifications required to achieve compliance are different building to building, and sometimes conflict with keeping desirable architectural and/or aesthetic features of a building intact. We strongly recommend to anyone considering converting a building into a Bed and Breakfast that they involve a design professional, such as an architect, early in the process. We're glad to answer any questions.

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