

AN ACT

relating to smoke alarms and fire extinguishers in residential rental units.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Sections 92.006(a) and (b), Property Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a) A landlord's duty or a tenant's remedy concerning security deposits, security devices, the landlord's disclosure of ownership and management, or utility cutoffs, as provided by Subchapter C, D, E, or G, respectively, may not be waived. A landlord's duty to install a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] under Subchapter F may not be waived, nor may a tenant waive a remedy for the landlord's noninstallation or waive the tenant's limited right of installation and removal. The landlord's duty of inspection and repair of smoke alarms [~~detectors~~] under Subchapter F may be waived only by written agreement.

(b) A landlord's duties and the tenant's remedies concerning security devices, the landlord's disclosure of ownership and management, or smoke alarms [~~detectors~~], as provided by Subchapter D, E, or F, respectively, may be enlarged only by specific written agreement.

SECTION 2. The heading to Subchapter F, Chapter 92, Property Code, is amended to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER F. SMOKE ALARMS AND FIRE EXTINGUISHERS [~~DETECTORS~~]

1 SECTION 3. Sections 92.251, 92.252, 92.253, 92.254, 92.255,
2 92.257, 92.2571, 92.258, and 92.259, Property Code, are amended to
3 read as follows:

4 Sec. 92.251. DEFINITIONS [~~DEFINITION~~]. In this subchapter:

5 (1) "Bedroom" means a room designed with the intent
6 that it be used for sleeping purposes.

7 (2) "Dwelling [~~, "dwelling~~] unit" means a home, mobile
8 home, duplex unit, apartment unit, condominium unit, or any
9 dwelling unit in a multiunit residential structure. It also means a
10 "dwelling" as defined by Section 92.001.

11 (3) "Smoke alarm" means a device designed to detect
12 and to alert occupants of a dwelling unit to the visible and
13 invisible products of combustion by means of an audible alarm.

14 Sec. 92.252. APPLICATION OF OTHER LAW; MUNICIPAL
15 REGULATION. (a) The duties of a landlord and the remedies of a
16 tenant under this subchapter are in lieu of common law, other
17 statutory law, and local ordinances regarding a residential
18 landlord's duty to install, inspect, or repair a fire extinguisher
19 or smoke alarm [~~detector~~] in a dwelling unit. However, this
20 subchapter does not:

21 (1) affect a local ordinance adopted before September
22 1, 1981, that requires landlords to install smoke alarms
23 [~~detectors~~] in new or remodeled dwelling units before September 1,
24 1981, if the ordinance conforms with or is amended to conform with
25 this subchapter;

26 (2) limit or prevent adoption or enforcement of a
27 local ordinance relating to fire safety as a part of a building,

1 fire, or housing code, including any requirements relating to the
2 installation of smoke alarms [~~detectors~~] or the type of smoke
3 alarms [~~detectors~~];

4 (3) otherwise limit or prevent the adoption of a local
5 ordinance that conforms to this subchapter but which contains
6 additional enforcement provisions, except as provided by
7 Subsection (b); or

8 (4) affect a local ordinance that requires regular
9 inspections by local officials of smoke alarms [~~detectors~~] in
10 dwelling units and that requires smoke alarms [~~detectors~~] to be
11 operational at the time of inspection.

12 (b) If a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] powered by battery has been
13 installed in a dwelling unit built before September 1, 1987, in
14 compliance with this subchapter and local ordinances, a local
15 ordinance may not require that a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] powered by
16 alternating current be installed in the unit unless:

17 (1) the interior of the unit is repaired, remodeled,
18 or rebuilt at a projected cost of more than \$5,000 [~~\$2,500~~] and:

19 (A) the repair, remodeling, or rebuilding
20 requires a municipal building permit; and

21 (B) either:

22 (i) the repair, remodeling, or rebuilding
23 results in the removal of interior walls or ceiling finishes
24 exposing the structure; or

25 (ii) the interior of the unit provides
26 access for building wiring through an attic, crawl space, or
27 basement without the removal of interior walls or ceiling finishes;

1 (2) an addition occurs to the unit at a projected cost
2 of more than \$5,000 [~~\$2,500~~];

3 (3) a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] powered by alternating
4 current was actually installed in the unit at any time prior to
5 September 1, 1987; or

6 (4) a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] powered by alternating
7 current was required by lawful city ordinance at the time of initial
8 construction of the unit.

9 Sec. 92.253. EXEMPTIONS. (a) This subchapter does not
10 apply to:

11 (1) a dwelling unit that is occupied by its owner, no
12 part of which is leased to a tenant;

13 (2) a dwelling unit in a building five or more stories
14 in height in which smoke alarms [~~detectors~~] are required or
15 regulated by local ordinance; or

16 (3) a nursing or convalescent home licensed by the
17 [~~Texas~~] Department of State Health Services and certified to meet
18 the Life Safety Code under federal law and regulations.

19 (b) Notwithstanding this subchapter, a person licensed [~~by~~
20 ~~the State Board of Insurance~~] to install fire alarms or fire
21 detection devices under Chapter 6002 [~~Article 5.43-2~~], Insurance
22 Code, shall comply with that chapter [~~article~~] when installing
23 smoke alarms [~~detectors~~].

24 Sec. 92.254. SMOKE ALARM [~~DETECTOR~~]. (a) A smoke alarm
25 [~~detector~~] must be:

26 (1) designed to detect both the visible and invisible
27 products of combustion;

1 (2) designed with an alarm audible to a person in the
2 bedrooms it serves; and

3 (3) [~~powered by battery, alternating current, or other~~
4 ~~power source as required by local ordinance,~~

5 [~~(4)~~] tested and listed for use as a smoke alarm
6 [~~detector~~] by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., Factory Mutual
7 Research Corporation, or United States Testing Company, Inc. [~~, and~~

8 [~~(5) in good working order.~~]

9 (a-1) If requested by a tenant as an accommodation for a
10 person with a hearing-impairment disability or as required by law
11 as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a
12 hearing-impairment disability, a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] must, in
13 addition to complying with Subsection (a), be capable of alerting a
14 hearing-impaired person in the bedrooms it serves.

15 (b) Except as provided by Section 92.255(b), a smoke alarm
16 may be powered by battery, alternating current, or other power
17 source as required by local ordinance. The power system and
18 installation procedure of a security device that is electrically
19 operated rather than battery operated must comply with applicable
20 local ordinances.

21 Sec. 92.255. INSTALLATION AND LOCATION [~~IN NEW~~
22 ~~CONSTRUCTION~~]. (a) A [~~Before the first tenant takes possession of~~
23 ~~a dwelling unit, the~~] landlord shall install at least one smoke
24 alarm in [~~detector outside, but in the vicinity of,~~] each separate
25 bedroom in a [~~the~~] dwelling unit. In addition [~~, except~~]:

26 (1) if the dwelling unit is designed to use a single
27 room for dining, living, and sleeping, the smoke alarm [~~detector~~]

1 must be located inside the room;

2 (2) if multiple ~~[the]~~ bedrooms are served by the same
3 corridor, at least one smoke alarm ~~[detector]~~ must be installed in
4 the corridor in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms; and

5 (3) if the dwelling unit has multiple levels, at least
6 one smoke alarm must be ~~[bedroom is]~~ located on each ~~[a]~~ level
7 ~~[above the living and cooking area, the smoke detector for the~~
8 ~~bedrooms must be placed in the center of the ceiling directly above~~
9 ~~the top of the stairway].~~

10 (b) If a dwelling unit was occupied as a residence before
11 September 1, 2011, or a certificate of occupancy was issued for the
12 dwelling unit before that date, a smoke alarm installed in
13 accordance with Subsection (a) may be powered by battery and is not
14 required to be interconnected with other smoke alarms, except that
15 a smoke alarm that is installed to replace a smoke alarm that was in
16 place on the date the dwelling unit was first occupied as a
17 residence must comply with residential building code standards that
18 applied to the dwelling unit on that date or Section 92.252(b). ~~[In~~
19 ~~this section, "bedroom" means a room designed with the intent that~~
20 ~~it be used for sleeping purposes.]~~

21 Sec. 92.257. INSTALLATION PROCEDURE. (a) Subject to
22 Subsections (b) and (c), a smoke alarm ~~[detector]~~ must be installed
23 according to the manufacturer's recommended procedures.

24 (b) A smoke alarm ~~[detector]~~ must be installed on a ceiling
25 or wall. If on a ceiling, it must be no closer than six inches to a
26 wall or otherwise located in accordance with the manufacturer's
27 installation instructions. If on a wall, it must be no closer than

1 six inches and no farther than 12 inches from the ceiling or
2 otherwise located in accordance with the manufacturer's
3 installation instructions.

4 (c) A smoke alarm [~~detector~~] may be located other than as
5 required by Subsection (a) or (b) if a local ordinance or a local or
6 state fire marshal approves.

7 Sec. 92.2571. ALTERNATIVE COMPLIANCE. A landlord complies
8 with the requirements of this subchapter relating to the provision
9 of smoke alarms [~~detectors~~] in the dwelling unit if the landlord:

10 (1) has a fire detection device, as defined by Section
11 6002.002 [~~Article 5.43-2~~], Insurance Code, that includes a fire
12 alarm [~~smoke-detection~~] device, as defined by Section 6002.002,
13 Insurance Code, installed in a dwelling unit; or

14 (2) for a dwelling unit that is a one-family or
15 two-family dwelling unit, installs smoke detectors in compliance
16 with Chapter 766, Health and Safety Code.

17 Sec. 92.258. INSPECTION AND REPAIR. (a) The landlord shall
18 inspect and repair a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] according to this
19 section.

20 (b) The landlord shall determine that the smoke alarm
21 [~~detector~~] is in good working order at the beginning of the tenant's
22 possession by testing the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] with smoke, by
23 operating the testing button on the smoke alarm [~~detector~~], or by
24 following other recommended test procedures of the manufacturer for
25 the particular model.

26 (c) During the term of a lease or during a renewal or
27 extension, the landlord has a duty to inspect and repair a smoke

1 alarm [~~detector~~], but only if the tenant gives the landlord notice
2 of a malfunction or requests to the landlord that the smoke alarm
3 [~~detector~~] be inspected or repaired. This duty does not exist with
4 respect to damage or a malfunction caused by the tenant, the
5 tenant's family, or the tenant's guests or invitees during the term
6 of the lease or a renewal or extension, except that the landlord has
7 a duty to repair or replace the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] if the tenant
8 pays in advance the reasonable repair or replacement cost,
9 including labor, materials, taxes, and overhead.

10 (d) The landlord must comply with the tenant's request for
11 inspection or repair of a smoke alarm within a reasonable time,
12 considering the availability of material, labor, and utilities.

13 (e) The landlord has met the duty to inspect and repair if
14 the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] is in good working order after the
15 landlord tests the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] with smoke, operates the
16 testing button on the smoke alarm [~~detector~~], or follows other
17 recommended test procedures of the manufacturer for the particular
18 model.

19 (f) The landlord is not obligated to provide batteries for a
20 battery-operated smoke alarm [~~detector~~] after a tenant takes
21 possession if the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] was in good working order
22 at the time the tenant took possession.

23 (g) A smoke alarm [~~detector~~] that is in good working order
24 at the beginning of a tenant's possession is presumed to be in good
25 working order until the tenant requests repair of the smoke alarm
26 [~~detector~~] as provided by this subchapter.

27 Sec. 92.259. LANDLORD'S FAILURE TO INSTALL, INSPECT, OR

1 REPAIR. (a) A landlord is liable according to this subchapter if:

2 (1) the landlord did not install a smoke alarm
3 [~~detector~~] at the time of initial occupancy by the tenant as
4 required by this subchapter or a municipal ordinance permitted by
5 this subchapter; or

6 (2) the landlord does not install, inspect, or repair
7 the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] on or before the seventh day after the
8 date the tenant gives the landlord written notice that the tenant
9 may exercise his remedies under this subchapter if the landlord
10 does not comply with the request within seven days.

11 (b) If the tenant gives notice under Subsection (a)(2) and
12 the tenant's lease is in writing, the lease may require the tenant
13 to make the initial request for installation, inspection, or repair
14 of a smoke alarm in writing.

15 SECTION 4. The heading to Section 92.2611, Property Code,
16 is amended to read as follows:

17 Sec. 92.2611. TENANT'S DISABLING OF A SMOKE ALARM
18 [~~DETECTOR~~].

19 SECTION 5. Section 92.2611, Property Code, is amended by
20 amending Subsections (a), (b), (c), (d), and (f) and adding
21 Subsection (d-1) to read as follows:

22 (a) A tenant is liable according to this subchapter if the
23 tenant removes a battery from a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] without
24 immediately replacing it with a working battery or knowingly
25 disconnects or intentionally damages a smoke alarm [~~detector~~],
26 causing it to malfunction.

27 (b) Except as provided in Subsection (c), a landlord of a

1 tenant who is liable under Subsection (a) may obtain a judgment
2 against the tenant for damages suffered by the landlord because the
3 tenant removed a battery from a smoke alarm [~~detector~~] without
4 immediately replacing it with a working battery or knowingly
5 disconnected or intentionally damaged the smoke alarm [~~detector~~],
6 causing it to malfunction.

7 (c) A tenant is not liable for damages suffered by the
8 landlord if the damage is caused by the landlord's failure to repair
9 the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] within a reasonable time after the
10 tenant requests it to be repaired, considering the availability of
11 material, labor, and utilities.

12 (d) A landlord of a tenant who is liable under Subsection
13 (a) may obtain or exercise one or more of the remedies in Subsection
14 (e) if:

15 (1) a lease between the landlord and tenant contains a
16 notice, in underlined or boldfaced print, which states in substance
17 that the tenant must not disconnect or intentionally damage a smoke
18 alarm [~~detector~~] or remove the battery without immediately
19 replacing it with a working battery and that the tenant may be
20 subject to damages, civil penalties, and attorney's fees under
21 Section 92.2611 of the Property Code for not complying with the
22 notice; and

23 (2) the landlord has given notice to the tenant that
24 the landlord intends to exercise the landlord's remedies under this
25 subchapter if the tenant does not reconnect, repair, or replace the
26 smoke alarm [~~detector~~] or replace the removed battery within seven
27 days after being notified by the landlord to do so.

1 (d-1) The notice in Subsection (d)(2) [~~Subdivision (2)~~]
2 must be in a separate document furnished to the tenant after the
3 landlord has discovered that the tenant has disconnected or damaged
4 the smoke alarm [~~detector~~] or removed a battery from it.

5 (f) A tenant's guest or invitee who suffers damage because
6 of a landlord's failure to install, inspect, or repair a smoke alarm
7 [~~detector~~] as required by this subchapter may recover a judgment
8 against the landlord for the damage. A tenant's guest or invitee
9 who suffers damage because the tenant removed a battery without
10 immediately replacing it with a working battery or because the
11 tenant knowingly disconnected or intentionally damaged the smoke
12 alarm [~~detector~~], causing it to malfunction, may recover a judgment
13 against the tenant for the damage.

14 SECTION 6. Subchapter F, Chapter 92, Property Code, is
15 amended by adding Sections 92.263 and 92.264 to read as follows:

16 Sec. 92.263. INSPECTION OF RESIDENTIAL FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

17 (a) If a landlord has installed a 1A10BC residential fire
18 extinguisher as defined by the National Fire Protection Association
19 or other non-rechargeable fire extinguisher in accordance with a
20 local ordinance or other law, the landlord or the landlord's agent
21 shall inspect the fire extinguisher:

- 22 (1) at the beginning of a tenant's possession; and
23 (2) within a reasonable time after receiving a written
24 request by a tenant.

25 (b) At a minimum, an inspection under this section must
26 include:

- 27 (1) checking to ensure the fire extinguisher is

1 present; and

2 (2) checking to ensure the fire extinguisher gauge or
3 pressure indicator indicates the correct pressure as recommended by
4 the manufacturer of the fire extinguisher.

5 (c) A fire extinguisher that satisfies the inspection
6 requirements of Subsection (b) at the beginning of a tenant's
7 possession is presumed to be in good working order until the tenant
8 requests an inspection in writing.

9 Sec. 92.264. DUTY TO REPAIR OR REPLACE. (a) The landlord
10 shall repair or replace a fire extinguisher at the landlord's
11 expense if:

12 (1) on inspection, the fire extinguisher is found:

13 (A) not to be functioning; or

14 (B) not to have the correct pressure indicated on
15 the gauge or pressure indicator as recommended by the manufacturer
16 of the fire extinguisher; or

17 (2) a tenant has notified the landlord that the tenant
18 has used the fire extinguisher for a legitimate purpose.

19 (b) If the tenant or the tenant's invited guest removes,
20 misuses, damages, or otherwise disables a fire extinguisher:

21 (1) the landlord is not required to repair or replace
22 the fire extinguisher at the landlord's expense; and

23 (2) the landlord is required to repair or replace the
24 fire extinguisher within a reasonable time if the tenant pays in
25 advance the reasonable repair or replacement cost, including labor,
26 materials, taxes, and overhead.

27 SECTION 7. Section 92.256, Property Code, is repealed.

1 SECTION 8. With respect to a dwelling unit first occupied or
2 for which a certificate of occupancy was issued before September 1,
3 2011, a landlord shall comply with the change in law made by Section
4 92.255, Property Code, as amended by this Act, on or before January
5 1, 2013.

6 SECTION 9. This Act takes effect September 1, 2011.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 1168 was passed by the House on April 26, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 145, Nays 0, 2 present, not voting; and that the House concurred in Senate amendments to H.B. No. 1168 on May 23, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 144, Nays 3, 2 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 1168 was passed by the Senate, with amendments, on May 19, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor