



Woodland Fire Department

Small Family Home (SFH) Facility

Process

Guideline CRR-012

PURPOSE

1/1/26

This document provides guidance for establishing and operating a Small Family Home (SFH) within the City of Woodland. An SFH is a licensed residential care facility that provides 24-hour care for children with disabilities. Because this is a licensed care use, SFHs are not considered standard single-family residences and are subject to additional building and fire life safety requirements.

This guidance is intended to help applicants understand the process and requirements necessary to obtain Fire Department clearance in coordination with the Building Division and State Licensing.

SCOPE

This guideline applies to Small Family Home (SFH) facilities located within the City of Woodland and Springlake Fire Protection District that provide 24-hour residential care for children with disabilities and are subject to licensure by the State of California.

This document establishes the fire and life safety requirements, review process, and inspection expectations administered by the Woodland Fire Department's Community Risk Reduction Division in coordination with the City of Woodland Building Division and State Licensing agencies.

The scope of this guideline includes, but is not limited to:

- New Small Family Home facilities proposed within existing residential structures
- Conversion of existing single-family dwellings to an SFH use
- Changes in occupancy classification, client capacity, or client mobility status
- Fire clearance inspections required for State Licensing (LIC 850)
- Ongoing fire and life safety compliance inspections

This guideline addresses requirements related to:

- Occupancy classification and use
- Fire protection and detection systems
- Means of egress and evacuation considerations
- Interior fire and life safety conditions
- Emergency planning and operational readiness

This guideline does not replace applicable provisions of the California Fire Code, California Building Code, California Residential Code, State licensing regulations, or local ordinances. Where conflicts exist, the most restrictive applicable code or standard shall apply.

Special detailed requirements based on use and occupancy can be located in Appendix 4, Section 435 of the 2025 California Fire Code.

The Woodland Fire Department reserves the authority to require additional fire and life safety measures based on site-specific conditions, client needs, or identified hazards to ensure the safety of occupants, staff, emergency responders, and the public.

DEFINITIONS

- **Ambulatory Client:** A client who is capable of independent movement and can evacuate the building without physical assistance from staff.
- **Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ):** The organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing the requirements of applicable codes and standards. For the purposes of this guideline, the AHJ is the Woodland Fire Department, in coordination with the City of Woodland Building Division.
- **Bedridden Client:** A client who is confined to a bed and is incapable of self-preservation or evacuation without full physical assistance.
- **Change of Occupancy:** A change in the use or classification of a building or portion thereof that results in a different occupancy classification under the California Building Code, including conversion of a single-family residence to a Small Family Home.
- **Client:** An individual residing in a Small Family Home who receives care or supervision as part of the licensed operation.
- **Emergency Evacuation Plan:** A written plan outlining procedures for safely evacuating clients and staff during an emergency, including staff responsibilities, evacuation routes, and designated assembly areas.
- **Fire Clearance:** Written approval issued by the Fire Department indicating that a facility complies with applicable fire and life safety requirements for the intended use. Fire clearance is typically documented using the LIC 850 Fire Clearance Request form.
- **Fire Protection System:** Any system or device designed to detect, control, or suppress fire, including fire sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, and related equipment.
- **Fire-Resistive Construction:** Building elements, assemblies, or materials designed to resist the spread of fire for a specified period of time, as required by the California Building Code.
- **Means of Egress:** A continuous and unobstructed path of travel from any point within a building to a public way, including exit access, exits, and exit discharge.
- **Non-Ambulatory Client:** A client who is incapable of independent movement and requires physical assistance from staff to evacuate the building.
- **Ongoing Compliance:** The continued adherence to applicable fire and life safety codes, standards, and conditions of approval after initial fire clearance has been granted.
- **Operational Permit:** A permit issued by the Fire Department authorizing the use, operation, or maintenance of regulated activities or equipment in accordance with the California Fire Code.
- **Small Family Home (SFH):** A licensed residential care facility that provides 24-hour care for children with disabilities in a residential setting, as regulated by the California Department of Social Services. A Small Family Home is not considered a standard single-family dwelling under the California Building Code.

OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND CHANGE OF USE

A Small Family Home (SFH) is a licensed residential care occupancy and is not considered a standard single-family residence under the California Building Code.

When a dwelling is converted for use as a Small Family Home, the occupancy classification typically changes as follows:

- R-2.1 Occupancy: Small Family Homes serving more than six (6) clients
- R-3.1 Occupancy: Small Family Homes serving six (6) or fewer clients

This change in occupancy classification constitutes a change of use under the California Building Code and requires a building permit, even when no physical construction or alterations are proposed.

The building permit process allows the City to evaluate compliance with applicable building, fire, and life safety requirements, including but not limited to means of egress, fire protection systems, accessibility, and evacuation considerations based on client needs.

Failure to obtain the required building permit and approvals prior to operation may delay Fire Department clearance and State Licensing approval.

SMALL FAMILY HOME (SFH) APPROVAL PROCESS

The following process outlines the required steps for obtaining Fire Department clearance for a Small Family Home within the City of Woodland. **All steps must be completed before a Small Family Home may operate.**

Step 1 – Apply for State Licensing

The applicant shall apply for licensure through the appropriate State of California licensing agency.

- Licensing will initiate the 850 Fire Clearance Request.
- Floor plans provided to Licensing must be consistent with plans submitted to the City.
- Fire clearance cannot be completed until the required building permit has been issued.

Step 2 – Submit for a Building Permit

Because a Small Family Home is a licensed care occupancy and not a standard residence, a building permit is required, even if no construction is proposed.

The applicant shall submit plans to the City of Woodland Building Division. Plans must include, at a minimum:

- Existing and proposed floor plans
- Number and location of client bedrooms
- Identification of clients as ambulatory, non-ambulatory, or bedridden
- Means of egress and exit paths to the exterior
- Door widths and hallway clearances
- Accessibility features, where required
- Locations of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms
- Fire sprinkler system information, if applicable
- Fire-resistive construction details, where required

Plan review will determine if upgrades or modifications are necessary to meet building and fire life safety requirements.

Step 3 – Fire and Life Safety Review

Fire and life safety requirements will be reviewed during the building permit process and verified in the field.

Requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Fire sprinkler systems
- Emergency egress and escape windows
- Exit door hardware and signage
- Fire extinguishers
- Interior fire-resistive construction compliance
- Electrical and mechanical safety conditions

Specific requirements will be identified during plan review and inspection.

Step 4 – Inspections

- All required building inspections shall be completed and approved. Building Inspections can be scheduled by calling 530-661-5820.
- Once the building permit has received final approval, the applicant shall contact the Woodland Fire Department to schedule the Fire Clearance Inspection. Fire Inspections can be scheduled online at: <https://outlook.office365.com/book/ConstructionInspections@cityofwoodland.gov/>.
- All fire and life safety requirements must be corrected and verified prior to approval.

Step 5 – Fire Clearance and Licensing Approval

- Upon successful completion of the fire clearance inspection, the Fire Department will complete and sign the 850 Fire Clearance Request.
- The completed fire clearance will be returned to the State Licensing Agency.
- Final licensing approval is issued by the State.

Step 6 – Ongoing Compliance

After approval, Small Family Homes remain subject to periodic fire inspections.

- Any changes to client capacity, client mobility, building layout, or use must be reported.
- Fire protection systems and life safety features must be maintained in working condition at all times.
- Additional permits or reviews may be required for future modifications.

CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Woodland – Building Division

300 First Street
Woodland, CA 95695

Phone: (530) 661-5820

Email: building@cityofwoodland.gov

The Building Division is responsible for building permits, plan review, and building inspections related to Small Family Home conversions and occupancy changes.

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Community Care Licensing Division

North/Central Valley Regional Office
2525 Natomas Park Drive, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95833

Phone: (916) 263-5744

Website: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov>

The Community Care Licensing Division is responsible for licensing Small Family Homes and issuing the 850 Fire Clearance Request.

Woodland Fire Department - Community Risk Reduction Division

1000 Lincoln Avenue
Woodland, CA 95695

Phone: (530) 661-5857

Email: Risk.Reduction@cityofwoodland.gov

The Woodland Fire Department is responsible for fire and life safety plan review, inspections, and fire clearance approval for Small Family Homes.