



**Rural Development**

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Administrator

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TO: All RHS MFH National Office Directors  
ATTN: All Multifamily Housing Program Staff  
FROM: Joaquin Altoro  
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SUBJECT: Emergency Call Systems in Multifamily Housing Units

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Unnumbered Letter (UL) is to provide guidance to Multifamily Housing (MFH) staff regarding emergency call systems, also referred to as “pull cords”, in MFH units.

**BACKGROUND**

The installation and use of emergency call systems in MFH units, commonly in bathrooms and bedrooms, have historically provided a means for tenants to alert others if they required assistance in the case of an emergency, such as a fall, fire, or medical issue.

Many installed emergency call systems are no longer operational and provide a false sense of security, leading tenants to believe the system will directly alert emergency response services or property management. Additionally, the need for emergency call systems has diminished due to the availability and advancements in technology such as cell phones and personal medical/life alert equipment.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Rural Development does **not** require the use of emergency call systems in any MFH units.

However, some MFH properties may still offer these services. If an emergency call system is in place in any unit, Rural Development requires the system to be operational. MFH properties which continue to utilize emergency call systems must comply with [7 CFR 3560.103\(a\)\(3\)\(xxi\)](#). The system must be regularly inspected in accordance with state and local laws. If a property previously utilized an emergency call system and it is no longer operational, the inoperable system must be removed.

Owners and managers are responsible for ensuring that tenants have a clear understanding of how the emergency call system functions. Rural Development recommends providing written instructions and a demonstration of the system to tenants. Recommendations include:

EXPIRATION DATE:  
August 31, 2025

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:  
Housing Programs

- Step by step instructions on how to use the system.
- Guidance to tenants on what services are available in response to the system activation; including clarification that the system is not tied to and therefore not a substitution for 911 emergency services.
- Clearly marked features of the system in each unit.
- Steps on how to correct a false alarm if the system is accidentally activated or misused by residents or visitors.
- Steps on how to report problems with the emergency call system.

If you have any questions regarding this UL, please contact Joanna Rogers, Finance & Loan Analyst, Asset Management Division, Policy & Budget Branch at [Joanna.rogers2@usda.gov](mailto:Joanna.rogers2@usda.gov).