



## Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly

We have prepared this guide so that you may easily and smoothly receive approval from the Santee Fire Department. We will outline the minimum, state-required, fire and life safety requirements for operating a residential care facility for the elderly. For more information on these requirements, please refer to Section 435 of the current California Building Code, which specifically addresses residential care facilities for the elderly.

### Pre-Inspection

We strongly recommend scheduling a pre-inspection before applying for fire clearance. This proactive step can save you time, money, and stress in the long run. During the pre-inspection, our experienced fire inspector will visit your facility to provide invaluable guidance on building and fire code requirements. While there is a modest fee for this service to recover the cost of our time, it's a small investment that can yield significant benefits:

1. Early identification of potential issues
2. Clear understanding of necessary improvements
3. Increased likelihood of passing the official inspection on the first attempt
4. Reduced risk of costly delays or renovations

### The Approval Process

1. Once you have submitted your application to Community Care Licensing, an evaluator will send us a Fire Safety Inspection Request form (STD 850 form). This will have your facility's information, contact information, and number and type of clients on it. We will then determine what codes apply to the facility based on the information provided and schedule an inspection within 30 days of receiving the request.
2. Once we arrive to perform the fire safety inspection, we must either approve or deny the application based on whether the home complies with the current California Fire and Building Codes. The California Building Code section pertaining to residential care facilities for the elderly can be found by [clicking this link](#).
  - a. At the end of this guide there is a section on how to prepare for the fire safety inspection.
3. After the inspection we will contact the evaluator and, depending on the results of the inspection, they will then reach out to you to complete the process.

### Helpful Definitions

- *Residential Group R-3.1*: Residence used to care for up to 6 clients and is licensed by a government agency.
- *Ambulatory*: Able to walk around freely, without assistance.
- *Non-Ambulatory*: Unable to leave the building unassisted if there was an emergency. Typically requires crutches, a wheelchair, etc.
- *Bedridden*: Unable to turn or reposition in bed.



## Requirements

### Automatic Fire Sprinkler System

If the home does not have a fire sprinkler system:

1. There may only be one bedridden client
2. Bedridden clients may not be housed above or below the first story
3. Non-ambulatory clients may not be housed above the first story
4. Clients of any type may not be housed above the second story

### Fire Extinguisher(s)

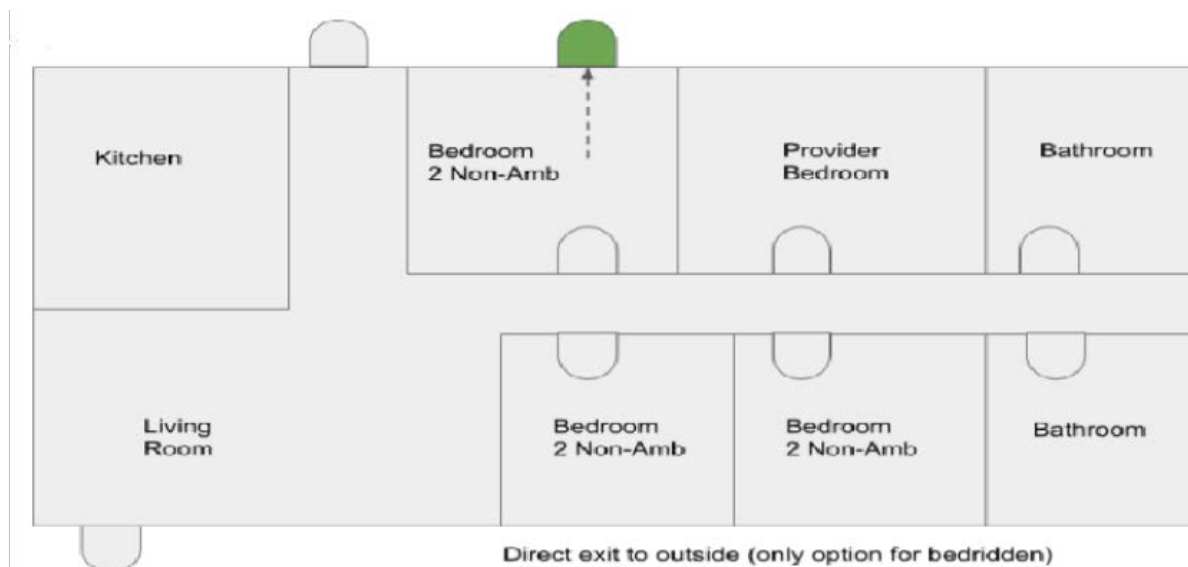
There must be a centrally located fire extinguisher, mounted at arm height, and have been either recently serviced with a service tag on it or recently purchased with a provided receipt for proof of purchase.

### Exiting

For bedridden clients

There must be an exit door complying with *all* of the following:

1. A direct exit to the exterior from the client's bedroom
2. Doors leading into the client's room must be self-closing,  $1\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-thick solid wood, and provided with a gasket to prevent smoke from getting inside the room
3. No night latches, dead bolts, security chains or similar locking devices are allowed on the interior of the client's door
4. The exterior of the door must have a handle to or latch to open the door from the outside
5. The door must be at least 3 feet by 6 feet, 8 inches and open to a full 90 degrees, having a clear width of at least 32 inches





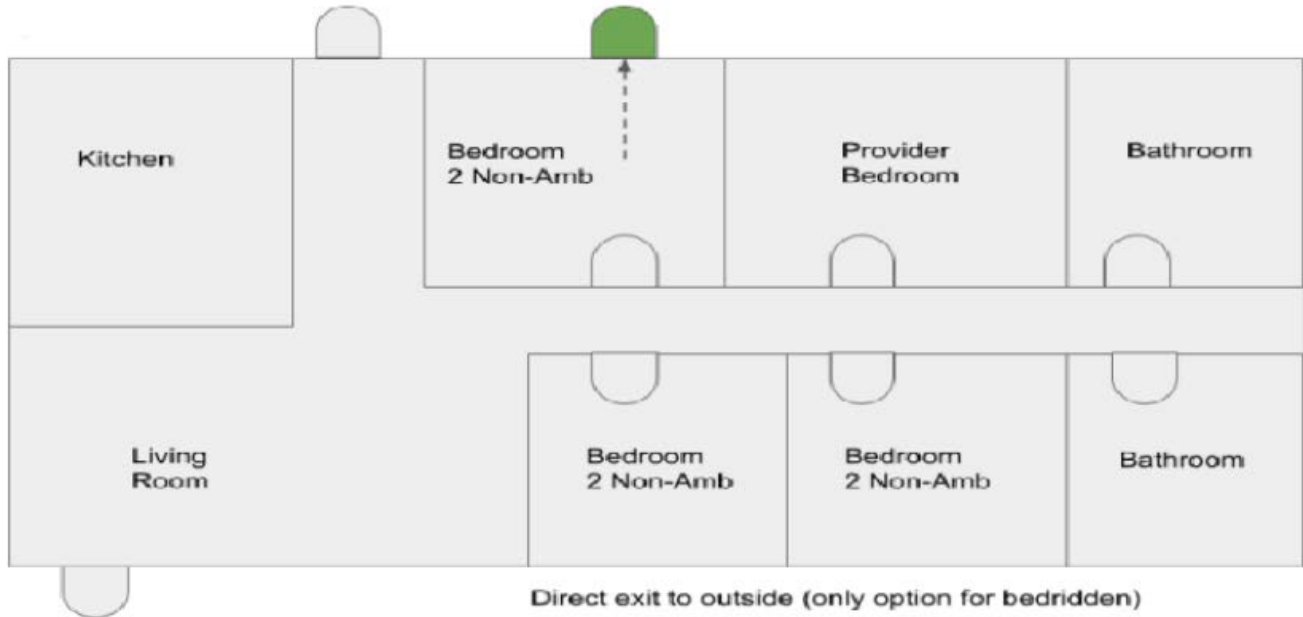
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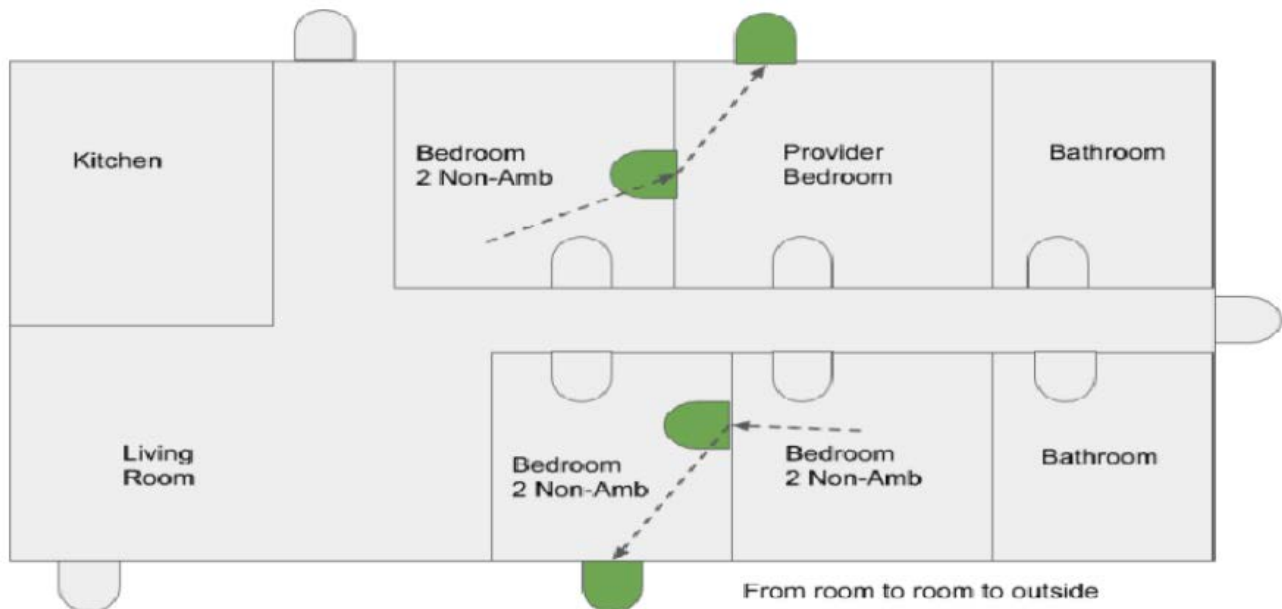
For non-ambulatory clients

There must be an exit complying with *any one* of the following:

1. A direct exit to the exterior from the client's bedroom



2. Direct access to a neighboring bedroom that has a direct exit to the exterior from the client's bedroom

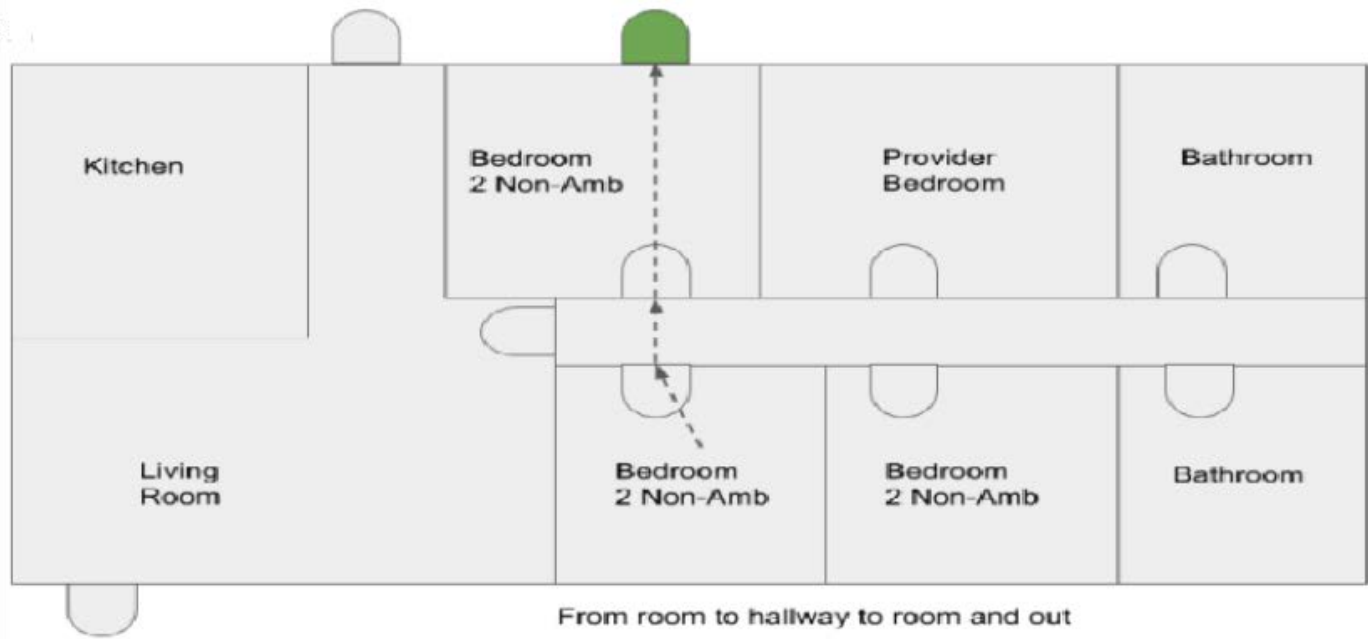




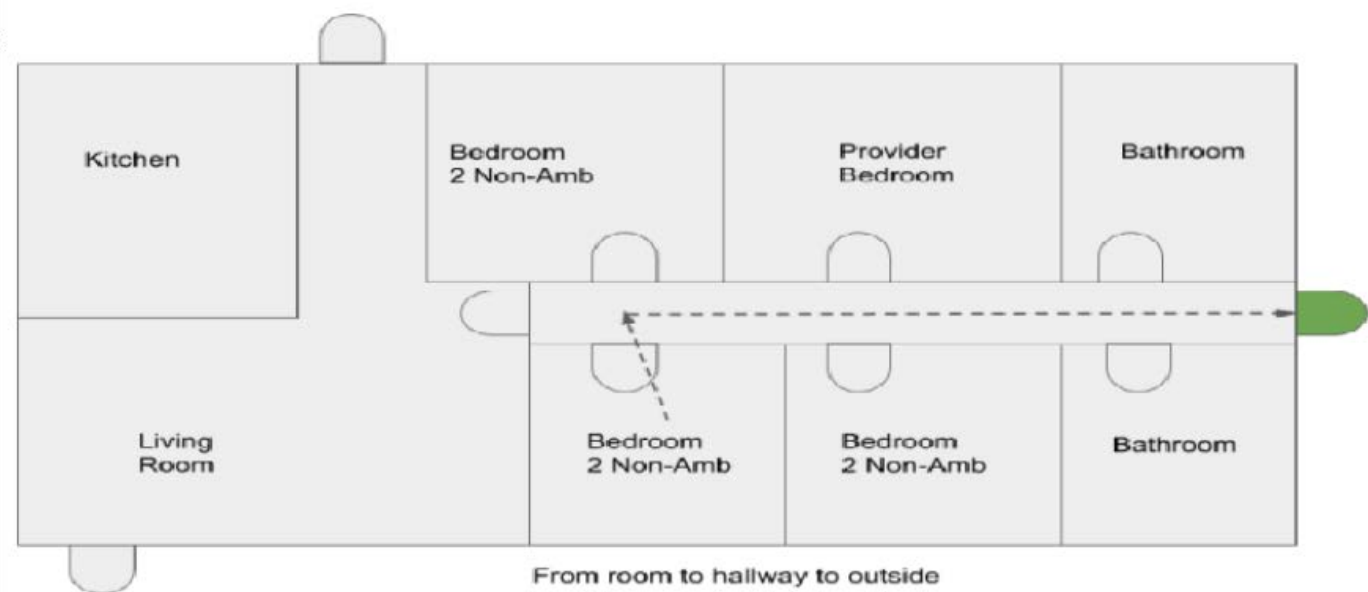
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3. The client's bedroom borders an enclosed hallway (separated from the rest of the house by a solid wood, 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch-thick door that is self-closing) where they could easily access their neighbor's room which has a direct exit to the exterior



4. Similarly, the client's bedroom borders an enclosed hallway (separated from the rest of the house by a solid wood, 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch-thick door that is self-closing) where there is a door at the other side of the hallway which has a direct exit to the exterior

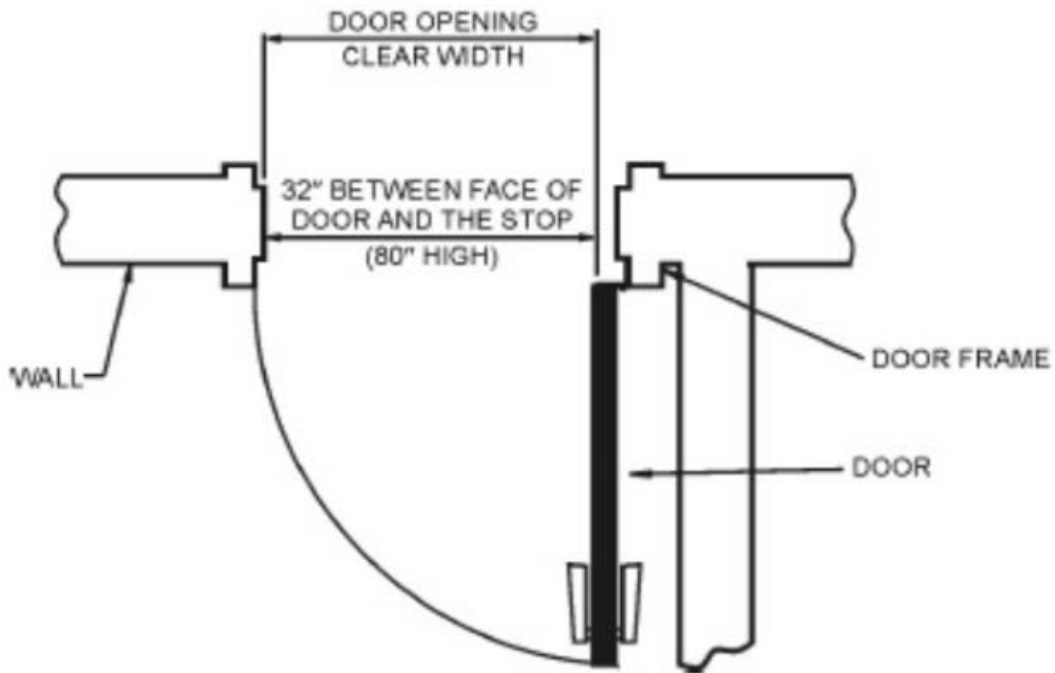




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A residential care facility for the elderly must have two exits which are remotely located from each other. Those two exits must be able to open with at least 32 inches of clear width. A manually operated horizontal sliding door may be used as one of the two required exits.





### Smoke Alarms

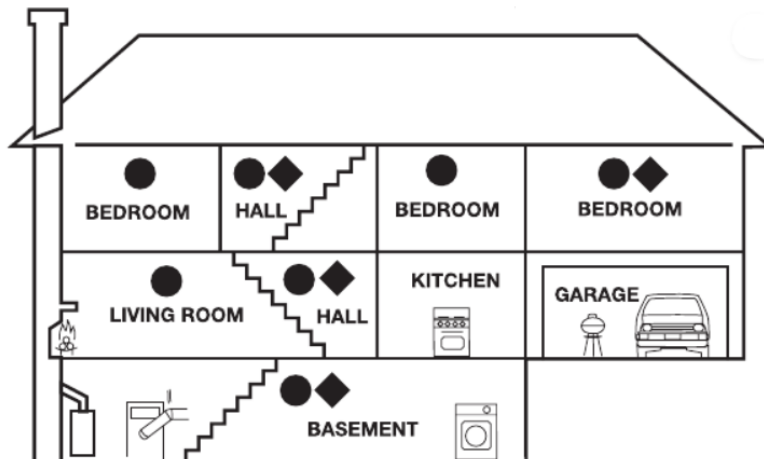
There must be working smoke alarms, under ten years of age, installed in the following locations:

1. In each bedroom/sleeping area
2. In the room or space leading to each separate bedroom/sleeping area in the home (for example, in the hallway, directly outside of the bedrooms)
3. On each additional story of the dwelling, including basements and finished attics

### Carbon Monoxide Alarms

There must be working carbon monoxide alarms, under ten years of age, installed in the following locations:

1. In the room or space leading to each separate bedroom/sleeping area in the home (for example, in the hallway, directly outside of the bedrooms)
2. On every occupiable level, including basements.
3. In every bedroom or sleeping area there is a fireplace or other fuel-burning appliance located within the space or an attached bathroom.



**KEY:**

- SMOKE ALARMS
- ◆ CO ALARMS
- ◆ BOTH, OR COMBINATION SMOKE/CO ALARMS



## Fire Safety Inspection Preparation Checklist

### Outside:

- The address of the home is easily seen from the street and stands out – at least 4-inch-high lettering for address numbers.
- Gates that are in the path of egress (escape) from the back door to the front yard are not locked. They must be able to be opened without the use of a key to facilitate quick exiting.

### Inside:

- Furniture like beds, tables, and other large items are in place and not blocking any windows.
- No outstanding electrical work like uncovered wall outlets are present.
- A fire extinguisher is mounted at arm-height (around 4 feet off the ground) in a central location like a living room, hallway, or foyer.
- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are interconnected, working and are under ten years old.
- Doors are at least 3 feet by 6 feet, 8 inches and open to a full 90 degrees, having a clear width of at least 32 inches
- The door in-between the garage and the interior of the home is either solid wood, solid metal, or honeycomb core steel. It must not be less than  $1\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-thick and be fire-rated for at least 20 minutes. The door must also close on its own and latch.
- The hot water heater has nothing near it to prevent from igniting stored items.
- Hallways (corridors) are at least 36 inches wide
- There are no significant changes in level that would cause tripping in the home if housing non-ambulatory clients.