

Tourist Rooming Houses



Updated 10.30.2025



Rural Environmental Health Alliance

Contact Your County Health Inspector

Green Lake: 920-294-4070

Marquette: 608-297-3128

This guide offers the basics of what an owner needs to know before starting to rent out their property to the public, and to ensure you know and comply with the various laws. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide listing every consideration that may arise but provides the highlights and entry level basics to short-term rentals also known as Tourist Rooming Houses.

Things to think about or do before you apply:

1. Verify with your Lake Association, Homeowner Association (HOA) or Property Owner Association (POA) if there are any restrictions or requirements in the area regarding short-term rentals.
2. Talk with your homeowner's insurance company. Renting may bring in extra income but can also bring liabilities.
3. Contact your local township/municipality/city to see if there are any forms you need to complete from them regarding any room tax.
4. If you have a septic system, check with your Zoning Department to verify the capacity, and ensure there are no issues.

Green Lake County Zoning Office: 920-294-4156

Marquette County Zoning Office: 608-297-3036

Additional Licenses Required

5. If your property is in the City of Green Lake or Marquette County, a separate (additional from REHA) license must be obtained through them. Please contact them directly to obtain paperwork.

City of Green Lake Office: 920-294-6912

Marquette County Zoning Office: 608-297-3036

6. Review rules to become familiar with requirements you must comply with to hold a lodging license.

State Laws

Wis. Stat. ATPC 97- Food, Lodging and Recreation

Wis. Admin. Code ATPC 72- Hotels, Motels, and Tourist Rooming Houses

County Ordinances

Green Lake County FSRL Ordinance- Chapter 148

Marquette County FSRL Ordinance- Chapter 35

City Ordinances

City of Green Lake- Title 7, Chapter 14

Collecting & Paying State, County and Local Taxes:

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue has issued some guidance on its website clarifying the imposition of state sales tax and local room tax on the rental of overnight lodging applies. Visit:

<https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/slf/room-tax.aspx>

It specifically states "Homeowners or other individuals who make rooms or lodging available to the public for periods less than one month, must report and pay Wisconsin sales tax on such rentals. This includes the short-term rental of a home, room, apartment, cabin, inn, motel, or any other building in which accommodations are made available to the public."

Federal Income Tax from Renting Residential & Vacation Property:

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued a summary page relating to Renting Residential and Vacation Property where they address the treatment of Rental Income. For their complete statement and their links to more extensive guides, such as IRS Publication 527 Residential Rental Property, visit: <https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc415.html>

Property Risks, Liability & Obtaining Insurance Coverage:

If you are considering renting out your home or your guest room, your first step should be to contact your insurance professional. Online platforms for renting your property to the public for overnight stays, such as Airbnb, can be a great way to bring in extra money and are increasingly popular; however, they can also leave you financially vulnerable. If your renter starts a fire and damages your property or is hurt while renting your home, will you be protected?

Before embarking on a home or property rental financial arrangement, call your insurance professional and get their advice. In general, if you are only planning to rent your home out for a single occasion, many insurance companies will extend your coverage to the renter. The one caveat is that the insurer must be notified ahead of time.

If you plan to rent out all or part of your home on a regular basis, many companies will consider this business use. Standard homeowners and renters' insurance policies are designed for personal risks, not commercial risks. In this case you will need to purchase a business policy—specifically either a hotel or a bed & breakfast policy. Some companies offer a home-sharing liability insurance policy that can be purchased on a month-to-month basis, but there may be exclusions and limitations, so read the policy carefully.

Disclaimer: *The information above does not affect obtaining a REHA Lodging license. With that said these are common concerns and questions new facilities have regarding these topics. This information was possible with the thanks to submissions by experts at the Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the Wisconsin Insurance Alliance, and the Wisconsin Counties Association.*

Paperwork:

- ☐ Complete and submit a REHA Application.
 - Once application is received an inspector will contact you to schedule a pre-inspection.
 - Once REHA permit is issued, it must be posted in a place visible to renters in facility.
- ☐ Complete additional license applications if you live in City of Green Lake or Marquette County.
- ☐ Each Tourist Rooming House must keep a registration of their guest(s), which includes name, phone number and address, or email. Records must be kept for at least **three years** and be provided upon request of inspector.
- ☐ Tourist Rooming Houses that source water through a private well on their property must have an annual **well water sample for bacteria and nitrates within the last 12 months**.

Where you can obtain water sampling kits

1. **Online:** Visit site below to order your private well water test kit to be sent straight to your home.
<https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/weal/Pages/Homeowner.aspx>
2. **Green Lake County:** Health and Human Services at: 571 County Road A, Green Lake WI.
3. **Marquette County:** UW Extension Office at: 480 Underwood Ave, Montello WI.

Employee Health:

1. Employee Communicable Disease

- Facility shall require employees to report to person in charge of symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or food/waterborne communicable disease.
- Employees shall not report to work when symptoms or diagnosis of communicable disease.
- Fact sheet regarding reportable symptoms and communicable diseases is available separate from this document.

2. Vomiting and diarrhea protocol

- A written procedure for responding to vomiting or diarrheal events must be on site.
- Fact sheet that provides written procedures, supplies required, and training for staff is available separate from this document.

3. Death, injury or illness reporting

- Operator or designee must complete a report within 2 business days on a form provided by department after an incident occurs where an emergency medical service response is initiated by the operator.

Fire Safety:

1. Smoke detectors

- Smoke alarms shall conform to UL 214.
- Must be installed
 - On each level of the house
 - On top of every stairwell
 - Inside of each separate sleeping room
 - Outside each sleeping room door. One detector can cover multiple rooms within a traveled path of 21 ft
- Smoke detectors should be replaced 10 years from the date of manufacture. (Highly recommended to write on outside of detector the date manufactured or required replacement date.)

2. Carbon Monoxide detectors

- A carbon monoxide detector shall conform to UL 2034.
- Must be installed
 - Within 21 feet of a fuel burning appliance and sleeping room
 - If a fuel burning appliance is inside of a sleeping room, one must be inside the sleeping room. (example: fireplace, gas water heater)
 - If the home has an attached garage, a CO detector must be installed within 21 feet of a sleeping room to the garage (i.e. mudroom, hallway).

3. Fire extinguishers are not required but are highly recommended.

- If they are present, they must be placed where they are visible for guests to easily access if needed in an emergency.
- In good repair and pressurized

Bathrooms:

- Slip-resistant flooring in the shower or tub shall be maintained or provide a mat that is slip-resistant.
- Soap and some form of hand drying agent must be provided for handwashing.
- Waste receptacles shall be provided in each bathroom. (No wicker)



Kitchen:

Whenever multi-use glasses, dishes and utensils are provided for a guest, the items shall be washed, rinsed, and sanitized in an approved manner between each guest. If you do not wish to sanitize all dishes between guests, you have the option to post a sign that instructs guests how to do this themselves. Example signs that you may use are provided at the end of this document.

- **Rules for posting the sign with instructions regarding sanitizing:** The sign shall be posted in a conspicuous location for guests to see. We recommend in the welcome book, refrigerator, in kitchen, but if placed inside a cabinet must be where the plates, bowls or cups are located.
- The facility must have either:
 - a) Non-Scented Bleach and a measuring device for guests to use to sanitize the utensils. The bleach shall be stored along with other cleaning products in the original, labeled container and out of reach of young children.
 - b) An NSF-certified residential sanitizing dish machine and proper instruction on how to use the sanitize cycle on the appliance.
- Operators must, at minimum, wash with soap and water any multi-use glasses, dishes and utensils left out after each guest stay and wash any visibly soiled and dirty items in the cupboards.
- Upon inspection, the operators shall be able to demonstrate full knowledge of their utensil washing practices with the Health Inspector.
- All appliances must be clean and in good working order.
- All food left from guests must be discarded before new guest arrives. Automatic ice bins and ice trays must be emptied, cleaned, and sanitized between guests.
- Common bulk items are allowed to be provided i.e. ketchup, spices, coffee, etc. if they come from an approved source and have not become contaminated. Store bought prepackaged items that **do not require refrigeration** may also be provided if they are from an approved source.
- All surfaces must be designed, constructed, and made of material that is easily cleanable.



Bedrooms: (Sleeping Rooms)

- Every mattress shall be covered with a nonabsorbent mattress pad or cover to protect it, and it shall be always maintained clean and in good repair manner.
 - Note:** If a pull-out couch or futon is being used for guest sleeping must also be provided with a mattress cover.
- All linens if provided (pillowslips, sheets, duvet cover, towels, washcloths, bathrobes, slippers) shall be laundered between guests and at least every 7 days for extended guests.
 - All bed coverings shall be washable.
 - Sheets shall be of sufficient size to cover the bed if provided.
- Bunk beds require railings on top bed. Bunk rails are recommended to meet the requirements of 16 CFR 1513 (diagram provided at end of document)
- **Building evacuation diagram:** must be posted in each bedroom **-OR-** provide with check-in materials given to guests.

Minimal Bedroom Exit Requirements:

- **First Floor Exits: (two exits required)**
 - At least one of the exits shall open directly to grade.
 - Second exit must be one of the following:
 - Door to garage w/ an exit door
 - Door to deck/balcony (≤15' above grade)
 - Egress window located in each bedroom
- **Second Floor requires two exits: (two exits required)**
 - One must be a stairway that leads to the first floor or ends at grade.
 - Second exit must be one of the following:
 - Door that leads to a balcony (no more than 15 feet above grade)
 - Egress window located in each bedroom
- **Loft Exits: (one exit required)**
 - If the loft exceeds 400 square feet, one stairway exit is required.
 - If the loft is less than 400 square feet, a stairway or ladder may be used.
- **Basement and/or Ground Floor Exits: (two separate exits required)**
 - One must go to the exterior of the building or stairway/ramp to the floor above.
 - Second exit must be one of the following:
 - A door to exterior of building
 - A stairway or ramp that leads to the floor above.
 - A stairway that leads to the garage provided the garage has an exit door (not car door)
 - An egress window that complies with exiting window requirements located in each bedroom.
- **Exit Window Requirements:**
 - Able to open from the inside without the use of tools or removal of sash
 - If opening is under a deck or porch discharge with a clear path cannot be more than 15 feet.
 - Dimensions of at least 20 inches by 24 inches
 - The lowest point of opening shall be no more than 60 inches above the floor.
 - If lowest point of opening is greater than 46" above floor; a permanent platform must be installed that measures 20" Wide X 9" Deep



Occupancy Numbers:

Advertisements for your rental shall reflect the maximum occupancy allowed by either the lodging code or county zoning/septic system rules, whichever is most restrictive.

It is also very important to note that basement or loft bedrooms that do not have appropriate exits/egress windows are **not available** to renters for use.

Lodging code ATCP 72.18(3)(b) reads

- Mattress width <50" allows 1 occupancy (Twin or Twin XL)
- Mattress width >50" allows 2 occupancy (Full, Queen, King)
- Beds placement: Arrangement must provide at least a width of 2 feet on one side of each bed for a clear path.
- No more than 2 beds may be stacked vertically
- Minimum 7 ft ceiling height



Building and Structural:

- **Garbage** shall be kept in leak-proof, non-absorbent containers equipped with tightfitting covers to protect from rodents, flies, and insects. The use of wood, paper or wicker containers is prohibited.
- **Exterior water spigots** are required to have backflow protection devices installed on them. (see examples)
- **Crawl spaces** under house or other areas/rooms you do not want guests to access, shall be secured with a lock.
- **Septic covers** must be secured with attached chain and lock.
- Any **window** that opens must have an intact screen to prevent entry of insects or rodents using 16 mesh or finer materials
- **Outdoor grills, smokers, firepits or other cooking equipment** must be kept **10 feet from the dwelling**.
Recommend securing equipment in a location you approve of.

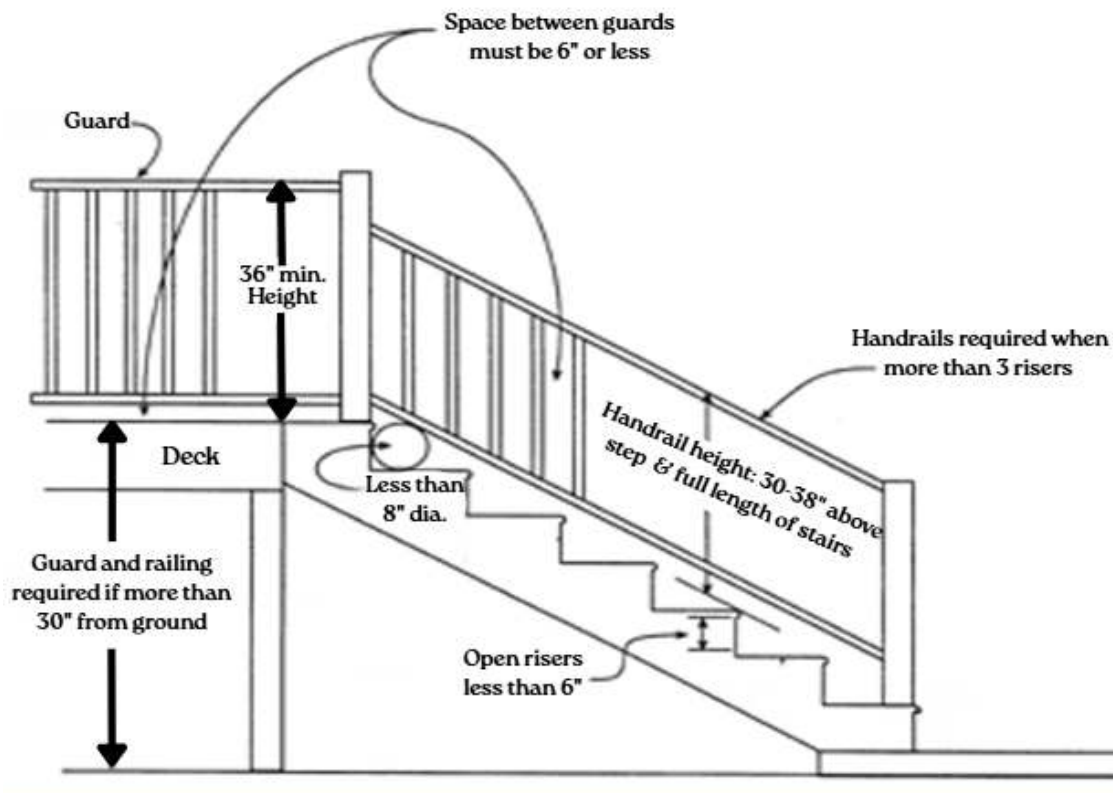
- **ATTENTION:** Marquette County facilities: no grills are allowed on decks per Zoning ordinance Chapter 35



- **Effective pest control** to prevent entrance, harborage, or infestation
- **Exterior doors** must be provided with a key or other electronic locking mechanism from the outside and a non-key locking mechanism from the inside.
 - Sliding exterior doors: not required to have key or electronic locking mechanism from outside but must have non-key locking mechanism from the inside.
- **Deck and railings:** secure, no loose boards, protruding nails, or screws. No trip hazards.
- Guardrails and handrails are required on elevated surfaces such as: decks, patios, balconies, lofts, and staircases.
 - Greater than 30 inches from ground level
 - More than 3 steps (risers)

Guardrail/handrail requirements: (see diagram below)

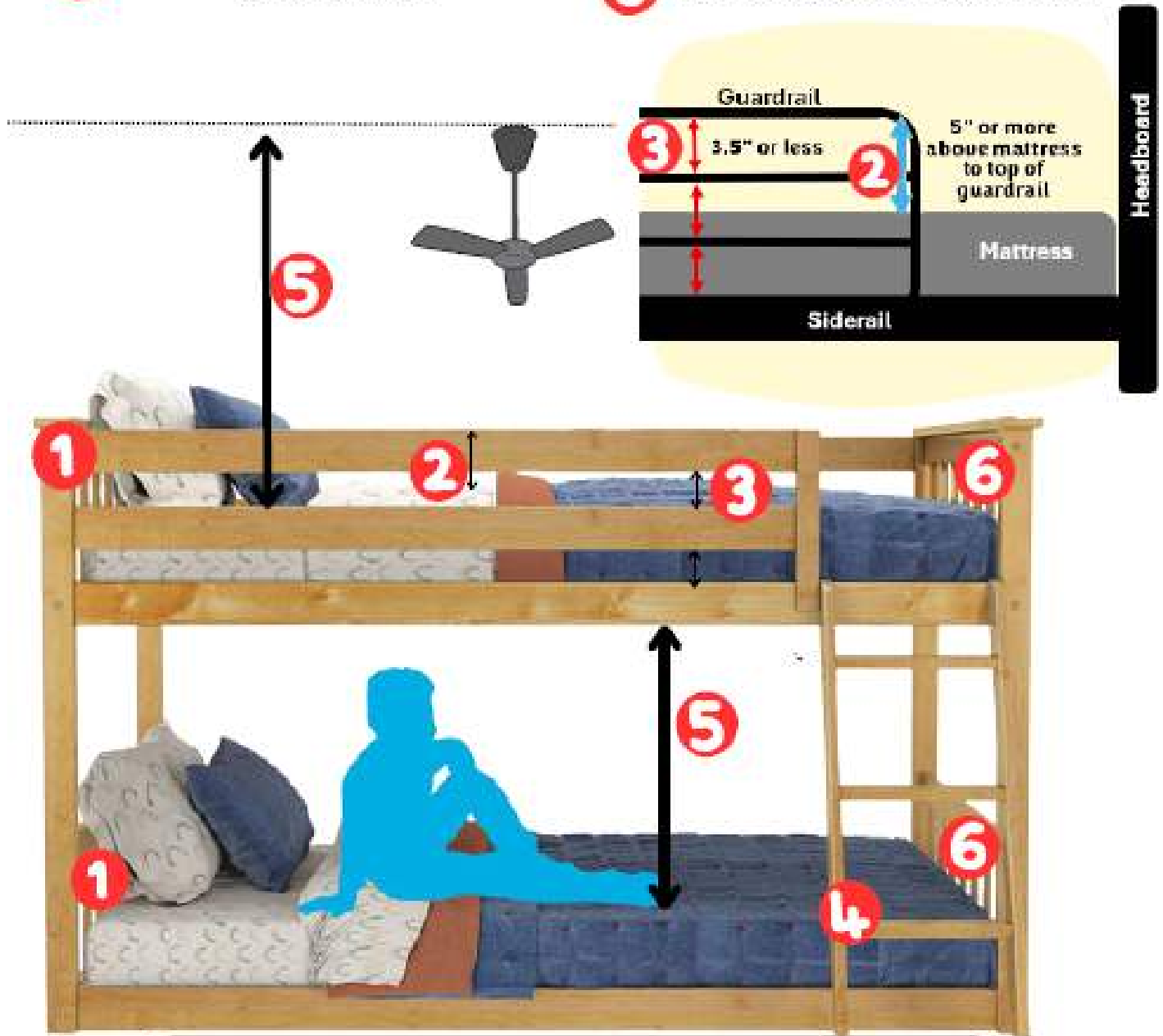
1. Guardrail must be at least 36 inches in height.
2. Handrails must be at least 30-38 inches in height.
3. Gaps between deck, railing and balusters may be no more than 6 inches wide.



Bunkbed Guidelines



- 1** End of structure at the head of the bed.
- 2** Guardrail height must be 5 inches or more above the mattress.
- 3** Vertical spacing between rails may not exceed 3.5 inches
- 4** Ladder
- 5** 2.5 feet from top of mattress to bottom of upper bunk and ceiling for upper bunk
- 6** End of structure at the foot of the bed.



Notes: Guardrail requirements apply to both sides of the bed when the bed is not secured against a wall.

If no NSF dishwasher is provided, use this sign:

Food and beverage utensils have been provided in this unit as a guest convenience and have not been sanitized.

It is recommended that you wash with a detergent, rinse with clean water, and sanitize utensils before their use.

To sanitize, after rinsing, add 1 teaspoon of unscented bleach per gallon of clean water and immerse utensils for a minimum of 30 seconds, then let air dry.

Bleach is located: _____



Rural Environmental Health Alliance
428 Underwood Ave
Montello, WI 53949

If NSF certified dishwasher is provided, use this sign:

Food and beverage utensils have been provided in this unit as a guest convenience and have not been sanitized.

It is recommended that you wash with a detergent, rinse with clean water, and sanitize utensils before their use.

To sanitize, refer to the instructions provided on how to use the dishwasher. The dishwasher is NSF Certified and can meet the requirements to properly sanitize the dishes before use.



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Tourist Rooming House Final Checklist:

Once this checklist is completed you will be ready for a pre-inspection. Some items may not apply to your facility and in that case, they can be disregarded.

- ☐ Application and full payment (pre-inspection + annual license) submitted
- ☐ Have vomiting and diarrhea written protocol posted for staff to follow in an event
- ☐ Have employee reporting symptoms and communicable disease established-recommend posting in facility
- ☐ Private well water results for bacteria and nitrate within the last 12 months
- ☐ Checked with local municipality, zoning, insurance company, and HOA/POA for additional requirements or licensing
- ☐ Smoke & Carbon Monoxide detectors are installed at the correct locations
- ☐ Sanitizing sign for multi-use dishes and utensils onsite for guests
- ☐ Hand soap and towels provided in bathroom for handwashing
- ☐ All mattresses have a fitting nonabsorbent mattress pad or sheet protector on them
- ☐ If linens are provided: proper fitting, extras are stored in clean, dry location, and everything is washable
- ☐ Dirty laundry is kept separated from clean linens-during cleaning and storage
- ☐ All windows that open have intact screens using 16 mesh or finer materials
- ☐ All exterior doors have locks that function for inside & outside. Sliding door(s) have interior locking mechanism
- ☐ Beds are arranged to allow for 2 feet on one side for emergency exit
- ☐ Evacuation diagram for dwelling is posted in each sleeping room or provided during check in (2 routes)
- ☐ Exits to dwelling and bedrooms meet requirements
- ☐ Bunk beds have proper railings and no more than 1 stacked
- ☐ Shower/bathtub has slip resistance surface
- ☐ Garbage for facility is appropriately secured and will be removed as needed
- ☐ Outside water sources have backflow prevention installed
- ☐ Decks or stairs have appropriate railing requirements and are in good/safe condition
- ☐ Grills or outdoor cooking units are 10 feet from dwelling (*off deck for Marquette Co.)

Marquette Office:
428 Underwood Avenue
Montello, WI 53949
608-297-3135

Green Lake Office:
571 County Road A
Green Lake, WI 54941
920-294-4070