

Cook County Vacation Rental License FAQ's

Q. How do I know if I need to have a license from Cook County to rent my house or cabin on a short-term basis?

A. The Vacation Rental License Ordinance defines vacation rentals as “any home, cabin, condominium or similar building that is advertised as, or held out to be, a place where sleeping quarters are furnished to the public on a nightly, weekly, or for less than a 30-day time period and is not a bed and breakfast; but excludes similarly-described premises which are managed by and regulated as part of a Hotel or Resort”. You can check with the Cook County Land Services Department for further information and a listing of hotels and resorts.

Q. When do I need to file for a Cook County vacation rental license?

A. The Ordinance establishes an initial five-month enrollment window for all existing operations, which starts on January 1, 2020 and ends May 31, 2020. If you plan to start a vacation rental operation after May 31, 2020, you will need to obtain a license from Cook County prior to starting operations.

Q. What is the cost for the County Vacation Rental license?

A. The Cook County Board of Commissioners has established the fee schedule. The cost is \$200.00 per year.

Q. What are the requirements of getting a Cook County Vacation Rental License?

A. The requirements to obtain a vacation rental license from Cook County are fairly minimal and includes the basic property and contact information for the owner and property manager, and also includes a self-certification of liability insurance for the property, and the rental must be in compliance with the Minnesota Department of Health License requirements (MDH).

Q. How do I know if I need a license through the Minnesota Department of Health for my vacation rental?

A. To find out if you meet the criteria that requires a Lodging License through the Minnesota Department of Health, you can contact their regional representative Sara Bents at 218-302-6184.

Q. Do I have to renew my vacation rental license each year?

A. Yes, the Cook County Vacation Rental License is issued on an annual basis and expires on December 31st of each year. The renewal process may be started 30-days prior to the end of the year.

Q. Will obtaining a vacation rental license impact the tax classification of my property?

A. The Cook County Vacation Rental License is not connected to the property tax classification, or the amount of property taxes due on any individual property. All tax assessment questions should be directed to the Cook County Assessor's Office at 218-387-3650.

Q. Is the County license transferrable to a new owner if the property is sold during the year?

- A. Yes, the new owner can continue to rent the property under the existing license so long as the Land Services Department has been informed of the sale and has been given the new owner's and manager's contact information.

Q. Will Cook County still require a Vacation Rental License if the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) does not require one?

- A. Each property will need to be evaluated individually but for most cases the answer is yes, so long as the rental meets the criteria to be licensed by the County.

Q. Do I need more than one County Vacation Rental License for my property?

- A. The Ordinance allows up to two rental units on a parcel in a residential zone district. For example; a house and a guest cabin. Each rental unit will require a County license, even if the MDH only issues one Lodging License for the property.

Q. I have property in the Resort Commercial/Residential zone district (RC/R). Will I need a County Vacation Rental License?

- A. If you are only renting one or two units to the public you will need a license for each unit. If you have three or more units and the Assessor has your property classified as a resort you are exempt from the County Vacation Rental license requirement.

Q. Can I rent any space on my property?

- A. Recreational vehicles cannot be used for short term rental. The ordinance also prohibits renting any accessory structures to the public, except a guest cabin.

Q. Do I have to pay the Cook County Lodging Tax if I have a vacation rental?

- A. Yes, all vacation rental properties are required to pay the lodging tax. Contact the Cook County Auditor for information on collecting and paying this tax. Failure to pay the lodging tax may result in revocation of the property's Cook County Vacation Rental license.

Q. If I disagree with a decision made by the Land Services Department regarding my vacation rental, what recourse do I have?

- A. The Vacation Rental Ordinance provides for an Administrative Appeals Panel made up of three individuals who can hear appeals from any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the Land Services Department.