

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 rental 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”.

Q. When do I need to file for a Cook County Vacation Rental License?

A. All new vacation rentals need to obtain a Cook County Vacation Rental License before rental operations begin.

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

A. The Cook County Board of Commissioners have established the fee schedule. The cost is \$600.00 per year for new and renewing licenses issued for rental operations.

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

A. The requirements to obtain a Vacation Rental License from Cook County are fairly minimal and include the basic property and contact information for the owner and property manager. Information is also required on the liability insurance for the property, source of water used in the unit, and the Minnesota Department of Health License number.

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 Lutsen: Sara Bents at 218-302-6184. Tofte and Schroeder: Callie Harrison at 218-302-6170 Grand Marais- Grand Portage including the Gunflint Trail: Ian Harrison at 218-302-6170

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 December 31st of each year. The renewal period begins on December 1st of the current license year and ends on January 31st. All licenses must be renewed by January 31st to avoid after the fines for late renewal.

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. No, the license can no longer be transferred upon sale of the rental unit. The new owner will need to apply for a Vacation Rental License if they plan to use the unit for short-term rentals.

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 in most cases the answer is yes, so long as the rental unit meets the criteria for the County license.

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

A. The Ordinance allows for 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 Cook County license, even if 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 with on-site management 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 Keli Berg in the Cook County Auditor's office for information on collecting and paying this tax. Her office number is 218-387-3644. 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 regarding vacation rentals.