



**FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL**  
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**TO ALL APARTMENT & CONDOMINIUM OWNERS**  
**SECURITY BARS, GRILLES, AND GRATES**

Each year, more than 4,000 Americans die and more than 25,000 are injured in fires, many of which could be prevented. Direct property loss due to fires is estimated at \$8.6 billion annually.

To protect yourself, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of fire. Fire spreads quickly; there is no time to gather valuables or make a phone call. In just two minutes, a fire can become life-threatening. In five minutes, a residence can be engulfed in flames.

Heat and smoke from fire can be more dangerous than the flames. Inhaling the super-hot air can sear your lungs. Fire produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. Instead of being awakened by a fire, you may fall into a deeper sleep. Asphyxiation is the leading cause of fire deaths, exceeding burns by a three-to-one ratio.

The Orange County Fire Rescue Department wants to remind its citizens that avoiding hazards such as security bars on doors and windows, without quick release mechanisms, may prevent thousands of injuries or deaths annually.

Security Bars, also called Burglar Bars or Window Bars, which are placed over windows, have become common in many cities around the country as crime increases. The fear of crime drives many people to install security bars and other devices on their windows and doors to prevent intruders from entering their homes. Security bars on doors and windows can provide a strong defense against intruders and give families greater confidence in their home's safety. The very bars they live behind for protection are the same ones that create an escape barrier and trap them, preventing them from escaping the toxic fumes of smoke and the heat of fire. Bars permanently secured over an escape route not only trap victims inside; they also prevent firefighters from being able to get them out and quickly become a death trap for firefighters on the inside as well.

Smoke detectors, fire alarms, carbon monoxide detectors are all part of a good fire safety plan, but don't provide the total solution if you cannot escape the smoke and flames in an emergency.

The Florida Building Code and Florida Fire Prevention Code require emergency escape windows from all sleeping areas of apartments and condominiums to remain unobstructed for the emergency escape of building occupants.

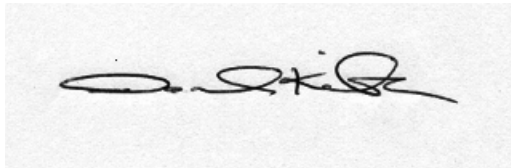
Emergency escape windows, doors, and rescue openings with security bars must have quick-release devices to allow them to be opened immediately in an emergency. If the security bars on an apartment, condominium, or home, especially on bedroom windows, are permanently fixed or do not have quick release devices, they must be retrofitted immediately with an approved quick-release device. These devices operate from inside and allow the bars to be opened for emergency escape without compromising the security of your home. The quick-release devices must be easy to open without the use of a key, tool or force greater than that which is required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening. Smoke alarms shall also be installed in accordance with Section 907 of the Florida Building Code, when security bars are utilized. All installations and renovations must be permitted and inspected by the Orange County Division of Building Safety and Fire Department.

Do not install burglar bars, grilles, grates or any device on windows or doors used for escape routes that cannot easily be opened from the inside. In a fire, your life will depend on it!

Should you have questions or need assistance with issues concerning security bars, please contact my office.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Kucik", is centered on a light-colored rectangular background.

Daniel K. Kucik, Assistant Chief / Chief Fire Marshal

Orange County Fire Rescue Department