

SAFER

Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters





What is SAFER?

The SAFER program provides direct cash assistance to eligible residents of British Columbia who are age 60 or over and who pay rent for their homes.

The Government of British Columbia recently introduced new amendments to the SAFER program.

Effective June 1, 2006, the 10-year Canadian residency requirement was reduced to one year in B.C. allowing more seniors to qualify. In addition, the heat allowance available to seniors through SAFER is being increased by \$10 a month to a maximum of \$35, effective July 1, 2006.

These changes build on the enhancements the Province made last year, doubling its funding for rent assistance under the SAFER program. Rent ceilings were increased across the entire province, and the program was expanded to include seniors who pay pad rental fees for owner-occupied manufactured homes.

Who is eligible?

You may be eligible if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You are age 60 or over.
- You and your spouse (with whom you are living):
 - Have lived in British Columbia for the full 12 months immediately preceding your application; and
 - Meet one of the following Citizenship requirements:
 - Canadian citizen(s); or
 - Authorized to take up permanent residence in Canada; or
 - Convention refugee(s).
- You pay **more** than 30% of your gross (before tax) monthly household income towards the rent for your home, including the cost of pad rental for a manufactured home (trailer) that you own and occupy.
- Your gross (before tax) monthly household income does not exceed the following:

	Greater Vancouver Regional District	Other Areas of the Province
Singles	\$ 2,333	\$ 2,033
Couples	\$ 2,517	\$ 2,217
Shared Accommodation	\$ 1,625	\$ 1,625



How is SAFER calculated?

SAFER reimburses between 35% and 90% of the difference between 30% of your total income and your rent. The program provides the most subsidy to people with the least income.

Regardless of your actual rent, SAFER will only consider rent amounts up to maximum rent levels. The maximum rent levels are:

	Greater Vancouver Regional District	Other Areas of the Province
Singles	\$ 700	\$ 610
Couples	\$ 755	\$ 665
Shared	\$ 975*	\$ 975*

* Divided by the number of adults in the home.

If your actual rent is higher than the maximum rent level, you may still be eligible for subsidy.

You will not be eligible if any of the following are true:

- You are under age 60.
- You live in subsidized housing or a residential care facility funded by the Ministry of Health.
- You live in co-operative housing and are a shareholder.
- You or your family receives income assistance through the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, excluding the Medical Services Plan.
- You do not live in British Columbia.
- You have not lived in British Columbia for the full 12 months preceding your application.
- You do not meet the Citizenship requirements.
- You are in Canada under a private sponsorship agreement.

Here are some examples of estimated SAFER subsidies for a single senior:

Greater Vancouver Regional District		
Annual Income	Monthly Rent	Subsidy
\$12,500	\$ 500	\$ 168.72
	\$ 700 +	\$ 348.72
\$15,000	\$ 500	\$ 103.42
	\$ 700 +	\$268.89

Other Areas of the Province		
Annual Income	Monthly Rent	Subsidy
\$12,500	\$ 410	\$ 87.72
	\$ 610 +	\$ 267.72
\$15,000	\$ 410	\$ 28.16
	\$ 610 +	\$ 189.02

Please note: Estimates valid between July 2006 and June 2007.

Frequently asked questions and answers.

When will my SAFER subsidy be effective?

- If you are eligible, your subsidy will be effective the month your application is received in our office. For example, if an application is received on July 29, it will be effective for the month of July. The SAFER subsidy is paid in arrears; therefore, the payment for July will be made at the end of the month.
- Once your application has been processed, BC Housing will contact you by mail.

How is the SAFER subsidy paid?

- The subsidy can be paid by cheque or by direct deposit to your bank account. Cheques are mailed during the last week of the month and direct deposits are made on the last working day of each month. We recommend direct deposit if possible.

Do I ever need to reapply for SAFER?

- Yes. Each year, a reapplication form will be sent to you 3 months before your birthday. You must complete and return the reapplication in order to continue to receive subsidy.

What happens if I move, I receive a rent increase or my income changes?

- Please inform BC Housing immediately of any changes so that we can make any necessary changes to your file. This does not include cost of living increases to pension income such as Canada Pension Plan or Old Age Security.

Is there a minimum amount SAFER will pay me?

- Yes, the minimum is \$1 per month. However, if your subsidy is less than \$15 per month, you will receive two payments per year. The first payment will be made six months after your birth month. The second payment will be made during the month prior to your birth month.

How is the rent subsidy calculated if I pay room and board?

- The SAFER subsidy does not cover board, cable, parking, laundry or other personal services; therefore, 50% of a room and board payment is considered to be the rent portion up to the maximum rent level.

May I apply for the SAFER rent subsidy if I am in a Long Term Care facility or in a residence that is subsidized through another government agency?

- No. Seniors residing in a Long Term Care facility or in a residence that is subsidized through another government agency are not eligible for SAFER.

My family sponsored me to come to Canada. Am I eligible?

- No. Seniors who are in Canada under a sponsorship are not eligible for subsidy while the sponsorship agreement is still in place.

Do I declare my SAFER subsidy on my annual income tax return?

- No. SAFER is a non-taxable rent benefit.



Important:

Please remember to immediately inform BC Housing of any changes in your address, rent, income, marital status, family size, or people sharing your accommodation.

By providing this information promptly, we can adjust your subsidy accordingly to ensure you are receiving the correct subsidy and avoid possible overpayments.

For your information:

BC Housing will audit some recipients. If you apply and become a SAFER recipient, you may be contacted and asked to prove your eligibility.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act covers the collection and use of personal information in BC Housing's files.

For more information, contact:

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BC Housing
101 – 4555 Kingsway
Burnaby, BC V5H 4V8

www.bchousing.org

Lower Mainland:
604-433-2218

Elsewhere in BC:
1-800-257-7756