

CHAPTER 137C
HOTEL SANITATION CODE

Referred to in §10A.104, 137F.3A, 331.382

Table listing subchapters I through VII and their respective sections (137C.1 through 137C.35) with brief descriptions of each section's content.

SUBCHAPTER I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

137C.1 Title.

This chapter shall be known as the "Iowa Hotel Sanitation Code". [C79, 81, §170B.1] 90 Acts, ch 1204, §66 C91, §137C.1 2018 Acts, ch 1041, §44

137C.2 Definitions.

For purposes of the Iowa hotel sanitation code, unless a different meaning is clearly indicated by the context:

- 1. "Bed and breakfast inn" means a hotel which has nine or fewer guest rooms.
2. "Department" means the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing.
3. "Director" means the director of the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing or the director's designee.
4. "Guest room" shall mean any bedroom or other sleeping quarters for transient guests in a hotel.

5. “*Hotel*” shall mean any building or structure, equipped, used, advertised as, or held out to the public to be an inn, hotel, motel, motor inn, or place where sleeping accommodations are furnished transient guests for hire.

6. “*Local board of health*” means a county, city, or district board of health.

7. “*Municipal corporation*” means a political subdivision of this state.

8. “*Regulatory authority*” means the department or a local board of health that has entered into an agreement with the director pursuant to [section 137C.6](#) for authority to enforce the Iowa hotel sanitation code in its jurisdiction.

[S13, §2514-h; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2808; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.1; C79, 81, §170B.2]

[86 Acts, ch 1245, §541](#); [87 Acts, ch 202, §2](#); [90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.2

[2004 Acts, ch 1026, §3](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §1906](#)

Subsections 2 and 3 amended and editorially internally renumbered

137C.3 through 137C.5 Reserved.

SUBCHAPTER II

LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

137C.6 Authority to enforce.

1. The director shall regulate, license, and inspect hotels and enforce the Iowa hotel sanitation code in Iowa. Municipal corporations shall not regulate, license, inspect, or collect license fees from hotels except as provided for in the Iowa hotel sanitation code.

2. If a municipal corporation wants its local board of health to license, inspect, and otherwise enforce the Iowa hotel sanitation code within its jurisdiction, the municipal corporation may enter into an agreement to do so with the director. The director may enter into the agreement if the director finds that the local board of health has adequate resources to perform the required functions. A municipal corporation may only enter into an agreement to enforce the Iowa hotel sanitation code if it also agrees to enforce the rules setting minimum standards to protect consumers from foodborne illness adopted pursuant to [section 137F.2](#).

3. A local board of health that is responsible for enforcing the Iowa hotel sanitation code within its jurisdiction pursuant to an agreement shall make an annual report to the director providing the following information:

- a. The total number of hotel licenses granted or renewed during the year.
- b. The amount of money collected in license fees during the year.
- c. Other information the director requests.

4. The director shall monitor local boards of health to determine if they are enforcing the Iowa hotel sanitation code within their respective jurisdictions. If the director determines that the Iowa hotel sanitation code is enforced by a local board of health, such enforcement shall be accepted in lieu of enforcement by the department in that jurisdiction. If the director determines that the Iowa hotel sanitation code is not enforced by a local board of health, the director may rescind the agreement after reasonable notice and an opportunity for a hearing. If the agreement is rescinded, the director shall assume responsibility for enforcement in the jurisdiction involved.

[C79, 81, §170B.3]

[83 Acts, ch 101, §30](#); [86 Acts, ch 1245, §542, 543](#); [90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.6

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §3, 30](#); [2007 Acts, ch 215, §207](#); [2018 Acts, ch 1144, §1, 16](#)

Referred to in [§137C.2, 137F.3](#)

137C.7 License required.

A person shall not open or operate a hotel until the regulatory authority has inspected the hotel and issued a license to the person. The regulatory authority shall conduct inspections in accordance with standards adopted by the department by rule pursuant to [chapter 17A](#).

Each license shall expire one year from the date of issue. A license is renewable. All licenses issued under [this chapter](#) that are not renewed by the licensee on or before the expiration date shall be subject to a penalty of ten percent of the license fee per month if the license is renewed at a later date. A license is not transferable.

[S13, §2527-I; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2809; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.2; C79, 81, §170B.4]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.7

[2002 Acts, ch 1119, §132; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §2, 16](#)

137C.8 Application for license.

Every application for a license under the Iowa hotel sanitation code shall be made upon a blank furnished by the regulatory authority and shall contain the items required by the department as to ownership, management, location, buildings, equipment, rates, and other data concerning the hotel for which a license is desired. An application for a license to operate an existing hotel shall be made at least thirty days before the expiration of the existing license.

[C79, 81, §170B.5]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.8

137C.9 License fees.

1. Either the department or the municipal corporation shall collect the following annual license fees:

a. For a hotel containing thirty guest rooms or less, fifty dollars.

b. For a hotel containing more than thirty but less than one hundred one guest rooms, one hundred dollars.

c. For a hotel containing one hundred one guest rooms or more, one hundred fifty dollars.

2. Fees collected by the department shall be deposited in the general fund of the state. Fees collected by a municipal corporation shall be retained by it and for its use.

[S13, §2527-I; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2812; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.5; C79, 81, §170B.6]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.9

[2007 Acts, ch 215, §208; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §3, 16; 2019 Acts, ch 136, §33](#)

Referred to in [§137E.3A](#)

137C.10 Suspension or revocation of licenses.

A regulatory authority may suspend or revoke a license issued to a person under the Iowa hotel sanitation code if any of the following occurs:

1. The person's hotel does not conform to a provision of the Iowa hotel sanitation code or a rule adopted pursuant to [this chapter](#).

2. The person violates a provision of the Iowa hotel sanitation code or a rule adopted pursuant to [this chapter](#).

3. The person conducts an activity constituting a criminal offense in the hotel and is convicted of a serious misdemeanor or a more serious offense as a result.

[C79, 81, §170B.7]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §36, 66](#)

C91, §137C.10

[91 Acts, ch 107, §9](#)

137C.11 Biennial inspections.

The regulatory authority shall inspect each hotel in the state at least once biennially. The inspector may enter the hotel at any reasonable hour to make the inspection. The

management shall afford free access to every part of the premises and render all aid and assistance necessary to enable the inspector to make a thorough and complete inspection.

[S13, §2514-q, 2527-m, 2528-d5; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2851; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.46; C79, 81, §170B.14]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.11

[91 Acts, ch 268, §430](#)

137C.12 Inspection upon complaint.

Upon receipt of a verified complaint signed by a guest of a hotel and stating facts indicating the place is in an insanitary condition, the regulatory authority shall conduct an inspection.

[SS15, §2514-s; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2852; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.47; C79, 81, §170B.15]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §39, 66](#)

C91, §137C.12

137C.13 through 137C.15 Reserved.

SUBCHAPTER III

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

137C.16 Plumbing.

1. A hotel shall have an adequately designed plumbing system conforming to at least the minimum requirements of the state plumbing code. The plumbing system shall have a connection to a municipal water and sewerage system or to a benefited water district or sanitary sewerage district whenever such facilities become available.

2. A hotel beyond the reach of a central water or sewerage system shall be served by on-site facilities which meet the technical requirements of the local board of health and the department of natural resources.

[S13, §2514-m, 2527-a; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2814, 2815; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.9, 170.10; C79, 81, §170B.9; [82 Acts, ch 1199, §92, 96](#)]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §38, 66](#)

C91, §137C.16

137C.17 Toilet and lavatory facilities.

A hotel shall provide toilet and lavatory facilities in accordance with rules adopted pursuant to [this chapter](#).

[S13, §2527-e; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2821, 2822; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.16, 170.17; C79, 81, §170B.8]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §37, 66](#)

C91, §137C.17

137C.18 Fire safety.

Violation of a fire safety rule adopted pursuant to [section 10A.523](#) and applicable to hotels, occurring on the premises of a hotel, is a violation of [this chapter](#).

[S13, §2514-j, -k, -l; SS15, §2514-i, -n, -o; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2843 – 2850; C46, 50, 54, 58, §170.38 – 170.45; C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.38; C79, 81, §170B.13; [82 Acts, ch 1157, §6](#)]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.18

Section not amended; internal reference change applied

137C.19 Employment of persons with communicable diseases prohibited. Repealed by [2000 Acts, ch 1066, §52](#).

137C.20 through 137C.22 Reserved.

SUBCHAPTER IV RATES

137C.23 Posting room rates.

A complete list of rooms by number together with the number of the floor and the rate per day per person for each room shall be kept continuously and conspicuously posted on the wall near the office in the lobby of a hotel in such a way as to be accessible to the public without request to the management. The rate per day per person for each room shall also be posted in the same manner in each room. No amount greater than the one posted shall be charged.

[C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2841; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.36; C79, 81, §170B.11]

90 Acts, ch 1204, §66

C91, §137C.23

Referred to in §137C.24

137C.24 Rate increases.

The rates posted under [section 137C.23](#) shall not be increased until sixty days' notice of the proposed increase has been given to the regulatory authority.

[C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2842; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.37; C79, 81, §170B.12]

90 Acts, ch 1204, §66

C91, §137C.24

SUBCHAPTER V RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

137C.25 Right of hotel operator to deny services.

1. A person operating a hotel has the right to refuse or deny the use of a room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel to any of the following:

a. An individual unwilling or unable to pay for the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel.

b. An individual who is visibly publicly intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or some other illegal drug, or who is disorderly so as to create a public nuisance.

c. An individual the hotel operator reasonably believes is seeking to use a room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel for an unlawful purpose.

d. An individual the hotel operator reasonably believes is bringing in anything which may create an unreasonable danger or risk to other persons, including but not limited to firearms or explosives.

e. An individual whose use of the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel would result in a violation of the maximum capacity of such hotel.

2. A hotel operator who reasonably refuses or denies the use of a room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel pursuant to [this section](#) is not subject to any civil or criminal action or any fine or other penalty, unless the refusal or denial is a violation of state or federal law.

94 Acts, ch 1032, §1

Referred to in §137C.25D

137C.25A Right to require financial guarantee.

The hotel operator has the right to require a person seeking the use of a room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel to demonstrate the ability to pay for such use by cash, credit card, or approved check. The hotel operator may require the parent or guardian of a minor to do all of the following:

1. Accept in writing the liability for the cost of the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel used by the minor, and for the cost of any damages to the room, furnishings in the room, or other facilities of the hotel caused by the minor while the minor is using the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel.

2. Provide the hotel operator with one of the following:

a. The authority to charge any amount due for the cost of the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel used by the minor, and for the cost of any damages to the room, furnishings in the room, or other facilities of the hotel caused by the minor while the minor is using the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel to a credit card as defined in [section 537.1301, subsection 17](#).

b. An advance cash payment sufficient to cover the cost of the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel used by the minor, and a reasonable amount as a deposit toward the cost of any damages to the room, furnishings in the room, or other facilities of the hotel caused by the minor while the minor is using the room, accommodations, facilities, or other privileges of the hotel. A cash deposit for any damages required by the hotel operator shall be refunded to the extent not used to cover the cost of any such damages as determined by the hotel operator following an inspection of the room, accommodations, or facilities of the hotel used by the minor at the end of the minor's stay.

[94 Acts, ch 1032, §2](#)

Referred to in [§137C.25D](#)

137C.25B Restitution.

In addition to any other applicable penalties, a court may order a person to pay restitution for any damages caused by such person which are suffered by the owner or operator of the hotel. Damages for which restitution may be ordered, in addition to physical damages, may include the loss of revenue resulting from the hotel being unable to rent or lease the room, accommodation, or facility during any time of repair, and restitution to any other individual who is injured or whose property is damaged as a result of the violation. The parent or guardian of a minor shall be liable to the owner or operator for the acts of the minor which result in damage to the room, accommodation, or facility, and for restitution to any other individual who is injured or whose property is damaged as a result of such acts.

[94 Acts, ch 1032, §3](#)

Referred to in [§137C.25D, 232D.504](#)

137C.25C Right to eject.

An owner or operator of a hotel may eject a person from the hotel for any of the following reasons:

1. Nonpayment of charges incurred by the individual renting or leasing a room, accommodations, or facilities of the hotel when the charges are due and owing.

2. The individual renting or leasing a room, accommodations, or facilities of the hotel is visibly intoxicated, or is disorderly so as to create a public nuisance.

3. The owner or operator reasonably believes that the individual is using the premises for an unlawful purpose including, but not limited to, the unlawful use or possession of controlled substances or the use of the premises for the consumption of alcohol by an individual in violation of [section 123.47](#).

4. The owner or operator reasonably believes that the individual has brought anything into the hotel which may create an unreasonable danger or risk to other persons, including but not limited to firearms or explosives.

5. The individual is in violation of any federal, state, or local laws or regulations relating to the hotel.

6. The individual is in violation of any rule of the hotel which is posted as provided in [section 137C.25D](#).

[94 Acts, ch 1032, §4; 97 Acts, ch 126, §8](#)

Referred to in [§137C.25D](#)

137C.25D Posting rules by owner or operator.

An owner or operator of a hotel shall post a copy of [sections 137C.25 through 137C.25C](#), in addition to any rules established by the owner or operator of the hotel, in a conspicuous place at or near the guest registration desk and in each room of the hotel.

[94 Acts, ch 1032, §5](#)

Referred to in [§137C.25C](#)

137C.25E Documentation and registration requirements.

1. A hotel shall keep and maintain for a period of three years, a guest register which shall show the name, residence, date of arrival, and date of departure of each individual renting or leasing a room, accommodations, or facilities of the hotel.

2. Each individual renting or leasing a room, accommodations, or facilities of the hotel shall register, and may be required by the owner or operator of the hotel to show proof of identity by producing a valid driver's license, or other identification satisfactory to the owner or operator. The identification shall have a photograph of the individual and include the name and residence of the individual. If the individual is a minor, the owner or operator may also require a parent or guardian of the minor to register.

3. The guest register may be kept and maintained by recording, copying, or reproducing the register by any photographic, photostatic, microfilm, microcard, miniature photographic, electronic imaging, electronic data processing, or other process which accurately reproduces or forms a durable medium for accurately and legibly reproducing an unaltered image or reproduction of the original.

[94 Acts, ch 1032, §6](#); [2017 Acts, ch 54, §76](#)

137C.26 and 137C.27 Reserved.

SUBCHAPTER VI

ENFORCEMENT

137C.28 Penalty.

A person who violates a provision of the Iowa hotel sanitation code shall be guilty of a simple misdemeanor. Each day upon which a violation occurs constitutes a separate violation.

[C79, 81, §170B.16]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.28

Referred to in [§137C.35](#)

137C.29 Injunction.

A person conducting a hotel in violation of a provision of the Iowa hotel sanitation code may be restrained by injunction from operating that hotel. If an imminent health hazard exists, the hotel, or as much of the hotel as is necessary, must cease operation. Operation shall not be resumed until authorized by the regulatory authority.

[S13, §2514-x; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2855; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §170.50; C79, 81, §170B.17]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.29

137C.30 Duty of county attorney.

The county attorney in each county shall assist in the enforcement of the Iowa hotel sanitation code.

[C79, 81, §170B.18]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.30

Referred to in [§331.756\(28\)](#)

137C.31 Conflicts with state building code.

Provisions of the Iowa hotel sanitation code in conflict with the state building code, as adopted pursuant to [section 103A.7](#), shall not apply where the state building code has been adopted or when the state building code applies throughout the state.

[C79, 81, §170B.19]

[90 Acts, ch 1204, §66](#)

C91, §137C.31
2004 Acts, ch 1086, §38

137C.32 through 137C.34 Reserved.

SUBCHAPTER VII
EXEMPTION — APPLICABILITY

137C.35 Bed and breakfast homes and inns.

1. This chapter does not apply to bed and breakfast homes as defined in section 137F.1. However, a bed and breakfast home shall have a smoke detector in proper working order in each sleeping room and a fire extinguisher in proper working order on each floor. A bed and breakfast home which does not receive its drinking water from a public water supply shall have its drinking water tested at least annually by the state hygienic laboratory or the local board of health.

2. A bed and breakfast inn is subject to regulation, licensing, and inspection under this chapter, but separate toilet and lavatory facilities shall not be required for each guest room. Additionally, a bed and breakfast inn is exempt from fire safety rules adopted pursuant to section 10A.523 and applicable to hotels, but is subject to fire safety rules which the director shall specifically adopt for bed and breakfast inns.

3. A violation of this section is punishable as provided in section 137C.28.

86 Acts, ch 1041, §3

C87, §170B.20

87 Acts, ch 202, §3

CS87, §170B.21

88 Acts, ch 1060, §1; 90 Acts, ch 1204, §66

C91, §137C.35

98 Acts, ch 1162, §4, 30; 99 Acts, ch 32, §1; 2018 Acts, ch 1041, §45; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1621

Subsection 2 amended