



A publication of Fairfax County, Virginia



Office of the Fire Marshal

10700 Page Avenue

Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Telephone: 703-246-4849

Fax: 703-246-6044

TTY: 711 or 1-800-828-1120

## CODE COMPLIANCE GUIDELINE

# ALL-NIGHT GRAD PARTIES

AND AFTER-PROM EVENTS

**\*\* PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN REQUIRED \*\***

This publication outlines the *Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code* (i.e., Fire Prevention Code or SFPC) fire safety requirements and prohibitions related to all-night graduation parties and after-prom events conducted within buildings located in Fairfax County and the towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna. This publication does not address temporary haunted houses open to the public, nor does it address special amusement buildings defined by the Fire Prevention Code.

\*\*\* PLEASE REVIEW THIS ENTIRE PUBLICATION BEFORE TAKING ACTION \*\*\*

Questions regarding the content of this publication should be directed to the Fire Inspections Branch at 703-246-4849 during regular office hours, Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## OVERVIEW

This publication was developed to further assist schools and community groups to plan and conduct alcohol and other drug-free activities during high-risk social periods of the year: graduation and prom. More specifically, the content of this publication is focused on the fire and life safety considerations related to all-night graduation parties and after-prom events.

**PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN REQUIRED.** In an effort to minimize the potential fire and life safety risks associated with these parties and events, while meeting the intent of the Fire Prevention Code, the Office of the Fire Marshal has established the following public safety planning procedures and general fire safety guidelines to assist planners and operators of all-night graduation parties and after-prom events maintain a higher level of fire and life safety, while reducing risk to the occupants. This publication does not replace, nor supersede, any provisions of the Fire Prevention Code or other codes and/or ordinances adopted by Fairfax County.

**THREE STEP PROCESS.** The following steps form the procedural framework for completing the public safety plan submittal/retrieval and for scheduling a fire marshal inspection.

- STEP 1 - Submit required public safety plan for review and approval.
- STEP 2 - Retrieve approved public safety plan and pay plan review fees.
- STEP 3 - Schedule a fire marshal inspection.

## STEP 1 - SUBMIT REQUIRED PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN

An application for public safety plan review for each all-night graduation party and after-prom event shall be made in writing to the Office of the Fire Marshal by the person responsible for the party or event. Applications may be obtained by calling the Revenue & Records Branch at 703-246-4803, or online at: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention/fmpublications/angapp.pdf](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention/fmpublications/angapp.pdf)

**PLAN SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS.** The following documentation (i.e., contents of the public safety plan) must be submitted along with the completed public safety plan review application to the Office of the Fire Marshal for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the event:

- Three (3) copies of a written emergency plan. *(See page 3 for details)*
- Three (3) copies of a facility layout plan. *(See page 3 for details)*
- Copies of any/all documentation certifying that all decorative materials and/or decorative vegetation are compliant with the Fire Prevention Code and applicable referenced standards such as NFPA 701.

Submit the plan review application and three (3) copies of the public safety plan to this address:

Fairfax County Office of the Fire Marshal  
ATTN: Revenue & Records Branch (All-Night Grad/After-Prom)  
10700 Page Avenue  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**Plan Review Fee.** An hourly fee of \$156 will be charged for the review of the public safety plan. Hourly fees are charged in quarter hour increments (\$39), rounded to the next quarter hour. Do not include a payment with your plan submittal. Mailed invoices are not provided. Full payment for plan review services is required at the time approved copies of the plan are retrieved.

## **STEP 2 - RETRIEVE APPROVED PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN**

The responsible party shall make arrangements to retrieve two copies of the approved plan. The Office of the Fire Marshal will retain one copy. Copies of approved plans must be retrieved in person from the 10700 Page Avenue address listed above during regular office hours. Plans will only be released after all plan review fees have been paid in full. To find out the review status of the submitted public safety plan, call 703-246-4803 during regular office hours, Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Notice about Fire Marshal Approval.** In accordance with Section 107.8 of the Fire Prevention Code, plans approved by the fire official are approved with the intent that they comply in all respects to the Fire Prevention Code. Any omissions or errors on the plans (i.e., public safety plan) do not relieve the applicant (i.e., responsible party) of complying with all applicable requirements. Furthermore, final approval of an all-night graduation party or after-prom event is subject to fire marshal inspection.

## **STEP 3 - SCHEDULE THE FIRE MARSHAL INSPECTION**

Approval of an all-night graduation party or after-prom event is finalized through a fire marshal site inspection on the date of the party or event. The inspection must be scheduled by the responsible party at least one week in advance. To schedule an inspection, call the Fire Inspections Branch at 703-246-4849, Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Notice:** The approved public safety plan must be available at the event location at all times.

**Inspection Fee.** An hourly fee of \$156 will be charged for the fire marshal inspection. Hourly fees are charged in quarter hour increments (\$39), rounded to the next quarter hour. Advance payment for the inspection is not required. You will be billed. Payment of fire marshal inspection fees is due upon receipt of an invoice.

## **WRITTEN EMERGENCY PLAN & FACILITY LAYOUT PLAN**

### **Written emergency plan shall include:**

1. The date and time of the party or event, name of the school/organization sponsoring the party or event, and the name and address of the party or event facility.
2. Complete contact information for the party or event committee chairperson and all alternate contacts in case the committee chairperson cannot be reached. This information should include mobile phone numbers, a mailing address, and current e-mail addresses.
3. Complete contact information for the building owner, along with alternate, after-hours, and emergency contact information. This information should include mobile phone numbers, a mailing address, and current e-mail addresses.
4. The approximate number of attendees and parents/facility staff.
5. Brief description of individual activity areas including associated special amusement devices, audio-visual and other special effects, and display of decorative materials/vegetation.
6. Evacuation and accountability procedures for all attendees in the event of an emergency.
7. Procedure for reporting a fire or other emergency. (*See "Fire Department Notification" on page 4*)
8. Identify the means of communication available to summon help if needed.
9. A plan to immediately stop any music, all audio-visual or other special effects, and to turn on the lights in the event of fire alarm activation or any emergency.

### **Key points to consider when formulating and utilizing the written emergency plan ...**

- ⇒ Ensure that all attendants/staff of the party or event are trained in the duties to be performed in case of fire, panic, or other emergency to include the operation of portable fire extinguishers, sounding or activating the fire alarm, calling 911, and evacuation of attendees.
- ⇒ Emergency procedures and evacuation plans should be reviewed and discussed with all party and event staff to identify the procedures and actions to be taken in the case of fire, power outages, or other emergencies requiring immediate action.
- ⇒ A minimum of one attendant should supervise each activity area, and shall perform appropriate duties in case of fire, panic or other emergency while the party or event is in operation. Each attendant should have a working flashlight with them at all times.
- ⇒ The written emergency plan should correlate with the contents of the facility layout plan, which is essentially the graphical illustration of the evacuation plan and key areas/locations.

### **Facility layout plan shall be in the form of a legible diagram and shall include:**

1. Locations of all exits and exit stairways (*clearly marked*).
2. Locations of corridors, pathways and aisles leading to all exits (*clearly marked*).
3. Primary and secondary evacuation routes (*clearly distinguishable*).
4. Evacuation staging area(s) (*clearly marked*).
5. Location of all planned activity areas and significant decorative displays (*clearly marked*).
6. Location of all approved fire extinguishers (*clearly marked*).
7. Location of controls to stop any music, all audio-visual special effects, and to turn on the lights in the event of fire alarm activation or any emergency (*clearly marked*).
8. Location(s) of portable power equipment utilized for the event such as a generator.

### **Important Notice about Portable Generators ...**

- ⇒ Portable generators shall not block any means of egress, shall be located outside and away from building openings, and shall have an approved fire extinguisher in close proximity.
- ⇒ For safety information related to the hazards of portable generators, visit the USFA online at [www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/carbon\\_monoxide.html](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/carbon_monoxide.html).

## **ASSOCIATED APPROVALS & PERMITS**

- The use of an electrical generator 6500 watts or greater and/or the installation of temporary electrical wiring, circuits, and equipment may require an electrical permit and inspection. Contact the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) at 703-222-0801 for information about electrical permits and required inspections/approvals.
- The use of a temporary tent exceeding 900 square feet, the storage and/or use of liquefied petroleum gas (i.e., propane, butane), and the display and/or use of open-flame, fireworks, and pyrotechnic special effects -- each require approval from the Fire Marshal, and are strictly prohibited until the appropriate permits have been issued. For detailed information about the permit requirements for these uses, contact 703-246-4849.

## **FIRE WATCH**

All attendants and supervisors of the party or event should maintain a fire watch, which involves keeping a diligent watch for smoke and fire, obstructions to means of egress, and other hazards during the party or event, and taking prompt measures for remediation of hazards, calling 911, and assisting with the evacuation of the structure in accordance with the written emergency plan.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT NOTIFICATION**

In accordance with sections 401.3 and 5003.3.1 of the Fire Prevention Code (as amended by Fairfax County), notification of emergency responders shall be as follows:

- **Fire Events.** In the event an unwanted fire occurs on a property, the owner or occupant shall immediately notify the fire department (911) and implement the evacuation plan. When an unwanted fire is discovered, do not delay! Notify the occupants, evacuate the structure as appropriate, and immediately call 911! Remember, a person shall not, by verbal or written directive, require any delay in the reporting of a fire!
- **Alarm Activations.** Upon activation of a fire alarm signal, employees or staff shall immediately notify the fire department (911) and implement the evacuation plan. This includes activation of monitored fire alarms designed to automatically call the fire department upon activation; employees or staff must also call 911 to report the fire alarm signal.
- **Hazardous Materials Release.** Any person who witnesses, discovers, or otherwise has knowledge of a spill, leak or other release of a hazardous material or other material that may negatively impact the environment, regardless of quantity, shall immediately report such spill, leak or release to the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) by calling 911.
- **Out of Service Fire Protection Systems.** Where a fire protection system is out of service, the fire department and the fire code official shall be notified immediately by calling the Office of the Fire Marshal at 703-246-4821 during regular office hours (M-F, 7a-3p). Otherwise, call DPSC after-hours at 703-691-2131 to make this non-emergency notification.
- **Delayed Notification Prohibited.** A person shall not, by verbal or written directive, require any delay in the reporting of a fire to the fire department.
- **False Report Prohibited.** It is unlawful for a person to give, signal, or transmit a false alarm.
- **Interference with F.D. Operations Prohibited.** It shall be unlawful to interfere with, attempt to interfere with, conspire to interfere with, obstruct or restrict the mobility of or block the path of travel of a fire department emergency vehicle in any way, or to interfere with, attempt to interfere with, conspire to interfere with, obstruct or hamper any fire department operation.

## **FIRE SAFETY GUIDELINES**

The following is only a partial list of the Fire Prevention Code fire safety requirements and prohibitions commonly associated with all-night graduation parties and after-prom events.

### **Fire Protection Equipment & Systems** ALL FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT & SYSTEMS SHALL BE OPERATIONAL!

Fire protection equipment and warning devices such as fire alarm panel(s), fire sprinkler heads, fire department hose connections, manual pull stations, audible and visual alarm devices (e.g., horns, speakers, strobes), and portable fire extinguishers shall not be obstructed from immediate access, view, and/or operation by any decorative material, displays, equipment, furnishings, or storage.

### **Emergency Vehicle Access & Fire Lanes** MAINTAIN EMERGENCY ACCESS - FIRE LANES SHALL NOT BE BLOCKED!

1. Emergency vehicle access to the building or event facility shall be maintained at all times.
2. If the facility has designated and approved fire lanes, it shall be unlawful to park or obstruct such designated fire lanes.
3. When planning for parking, advise all attendees to observe fire lane regulations to avoid the possibility of getting a \$50 parking ticket and/or having their vehicle(s) towed.
4. Parking is prohibited within 15' feet of a fire hydrant; \$50 parking ticket and tow!
5. Identify the best locations for ambulance access to building entry doorways to help expedite emergency medical service when needed.

### **Emergency Exits & Evacuation Routes** MAINTAIN ALL EXITS - LOCKED & BLOCKED EGRESS DOORS ARE PROHIBITED!

1. Decorations or other objects shall not be placed in any way that would obstruct any exit.
2. Required exits shall be continuously maintained free from obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency.
3. Exit doors shall be readily operable from the egress side (inside) without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
4. The minimum required width of exit access aisles and passageways shall maintained clear.
5. Exit enclosures, exit stairwells, and exit corridors shall be kept free of obstructions, combustible materials, tables and chairs, decorations, displays, storage, and people, and shall be accessible for egress and properly illuminated at all times.
6. All exit signs shall be illuminated and clearly visible.
7. Emergency lighting shall be maintained and operational.

### **Open-Flame, Smoking, and Special Effects** PROTECT THE OCCUPANTS FROM FIRE - ELIMINATE IGNITION SOURCES!

1. Candles and open-flame lanterns shall be prohibited inside party or event locations.
2. Self-contained decorative open-flame devices may be used outside of party or event locations only with approval of the fire marshal.
3. Smoking shall only be permitted outside and away from party or event locations, and only in approved, designated smoking areas.
4. Portable open-flame heaters shall be prohibited inside party or event locations.
5. Vapor or smoke producing effects, such as smoke machines, are not permitted in party or event locations due to the possibility of fire alarm activation, obscuring of exits and exit signs, and the possibility of increased panic in an emergency.
6. In the event of fire alarm activation or any emergency, a plan shall be in place to turn on the building lighting, and immediately stop all music, noise, and other audio-visual special effects. This procedure should be identified in the written emergency plan.
7. Unless specifically approved by the Fire Marshal, fireworks, pyrotechnics and flame-effects before an audience are prohibited inside and outside any party or event occupancy/venue.

**Electrical Safety** PROTECT THE OCCUPANTS FROM ELECTRICAL HAZARDS - ENSURE CODE COMPLIANT ELECTRICAL SOURCES!

1. The use of unlisted electrical wiring and lighting on natural cut trees and artificial decorative vegetation shall be prohibited. Electrical wiring and lighting shall be listed and shall be used according to manufacturer's instructions. The term "Listed" means equipment or materials included on a list published by an approved testing laboratory, inspection agency or other organization, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL), concerned with product safety evaluation and testing. Listed lighting decorations may be used as long as contact is not made with any combustible material.
2. Lights with loose sockets, frayed or bare wires, and lights that produce excessive heat or other dangerous conditions shall be prohibited.
3. Extension cords must be of the heavy-duty type, shall not be plugged together to make longer cords, and shall not be overloaded. Extension cords shall not be extended through walls or ceilings, or under floor coverings.
4. Extension cords with excessive physical damage and/or frayed or bare wires shall be prohibited, and shall be located and secured to prevent creating a trip hazard.
5. The use of unapproved electrical wiring such as "zip cord" in the arrangement or application of temporary theatrical style lighting shall be prohibited.
6. The use of electrical wiring, devices, appliances and other equipment that is modified or damaged and constitutes an electrical shock or fire hazard shall be prohibited. Open junction boxes and open-wiring splices in electrical circuits and wiring shall be prohibited.

**Decorative Materials & Vegetation** PROTECT THE OCCUPANTS FROM FIRE - ENSURE MATERIALS ARE FIRE RETARDENT!

1. Decorations shall not be attached or suspended from any ceiling or wall-mounted fire and life-safety devices (e.g., sprinklers, exit signs, emergency lighting, alarm devices, etc.).
2. Decorations shall not obstruct the visibility or access to any emergency exit, nor reduce the required minimum clear width of any part of the means of egress.
3. Decorative materials such as curtains, draperies, hangings, and other materials suspended from walls and ceilings shall meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701 or be noncombustible. Where required to be flame resistant or flame-retardant, decorative materials shall be tested by an approved agency and meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701. Reports of test results shall be prepared in accordance with NFPA 701 and furnished to the fire code official upon request. Be prepared to provide this information in the public safety plan.
4. Artificial vegetation shall be certified flame-resistant or flame-retardant in accordance with flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701.
5. Flammable natural vegetation materials such as batting, cloth, cotton, hay, stalks, straw, vines, leaves, trees, moss, and similar items shall not be used for decorative purposes in show windows, building lobbies, exits, exit access, or other parts of buildings, or any area of public use in such a quantity as to constitute a fire hazard. Natural cut trees and other natural vegetation shall be in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Fire Prevention Code. For more information about natural and artificial vegetation, read the following publication:

**[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention/fmpublications/fmvegetation.pdf](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention/fmpublications/fmvegetation.pdf)**