



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

DATE: March 2, 2011

TO: Architects, Builders, Building Owners, Property Managers, General Contractors, and Fire Protection Equipment Installation and Maintenance Contractors

FROM: Fairfax County Office of the Fire Marshal on behalf of the Building Official

SUBJECT: Fire Protection Equipment and Systems: *Construction Permit Requirements*

The purpose of this letter is to advise all parties involved with the installation, alteration, repair, modification, rehabilitation, inspection, and/or testing of fire protection equipment and systems about the construction permit requirements for the installation of new fire protection equipment/systems, and alteration or modification involving existing fire protection equipment/systems in Fairfax County and the towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna. This letter replaces the Letter to Community and Industry dated March 25, 2010, and is in accordance with the 2009 *Uniform Statewide Building Code* (USBC) which went into effect March 1, 2011.

Referenced Standards. Section 101.6 of the *Uniform Statewide Building Code* (USBC) specifies that provisions of Chapter 1 of the USBC supersede conflicting provisions of the codes and standards referenced in the *International Building Code* (IBC). Even though the need for a construction permit may not be specified or implied in referenced fire protection standards, including but not limited to NFPA 13, NFPA 14, NFPA 20, and NFPA 72, a construction permit shall be required for installation of new fire protection equipment/systems and alteration, modification, or rehabilitation involving existing fire protection equipment/systems, except where otherwise exempted.

Permit Required. In accordance with Sections 108 and 901.3 of the USBC and Section 901.2 of the *Statewide Fire Prevention Code* (SFPC), a construction permit is required for the installation, modification, and rehabilitation, involving the following fire protection equipment and systems, except where otherwise exempted:

- Elevator Fire Safety Control Systems
- Fire Alarm and Detection Systems
- Fire Protection Supervisory Systems
- Fire Pumps, Pump Controllers, and Related Equipment
- Fire Suppression and Sprinkler Systems
- Private Fire Hydrants
- Smoke Control Systems
- Standpipe Systems



Maintenance and Repairs Involving Component Replacement. Periodic maintenance and simple repairs to defective existing fire protection systems and equipment, whether routine or emergency, involving the replacement of initiating devices, notifications appliances, sprinkler heads, water control valves and similar fire suppression items shall not require a construction permit provided the repair is made using duplicate components with the exact same characteristics. This includes such items as sprinkler heads, audio-visual devices, pull stations, smoke and heat detectors, flow switches, and control valves using the same fitting, with no alteration to drop, pipe configurations, ceiling, arm-over, alteration to wiring, same back box, or mounting location can occur without permit and inspection from the Fire Protection Systems Branch of the Office of the Fire Marshal.

Defective Equipment and/or Maintenance Not Requiring a Construction Permit

Fire Suppression Related

Re-work Valve Interior	Hanger Adjustment/Reseat	Antifreeze Check	Flange Re-bolt
Valve Cleaning	Hanger Replacement	Antifreeze Replacement	Reset Air Pressure
Gasket Replacement	Replace Escutcheon Plate	Add/Install Signage	Install New FDC Caps
Clean Sensing Lines	Install New Gauges	Restock Spare Sprinklers	Sight Glass Replacement
Replace Sprinkler Head	<i>Replacement of a defective sprinkler head with a sprinkler head having the exact same characteristics, installed in the same fitting, with no alteration to drop, ceiling, or arm-over is considered maintenance. A construction permit is required for any work exceeding what is specifically listed above.</i>		
Backflow Prevention Device Installation	<i>A backflow prevention device (BPD) inspection does not require construction permit from the Fire Marshal, however, a construction permit is required by DPWES.</i>		

Fire Alarm & Detection Related

Detector Cleaning	Replace Flow Switch	Replace Fuses/LEDs	In-House Testing
Adjust Detector Sensitivity	Replace Pressure Switch	Replace Pull Station	Wiring Repair
Replace Duct Detector	Replace Tamper Switch	Replace Battery	Replace Initiating Device
Replace Smoke Detector (base/head)	<i>Replacement of a defective device with an identical device (exact same characteristics) in the same back box, with no alteration to wiring, mounting, location, or configuration is considered maintenance. A construction permit is required for any work exceeding what is specifically listed above.</i>		
Replace Heat Detector (head/base)			

Fire Pump Related

Replace Stuffing/Packing	Replace Casing Gasket	Remove Obstructions	Install New Gauges
Replace Wearing Rings	Clean Motor (windings)	Diesel Ventilation, Battery	Heat/Light in Pump Room
Re-align Shaft	<i>In addition to the restrictions above, maintenance and repairs made with non-duplicate, non-exact components is deemed an alteration or modification to an existing fire protection system and requires a construction permit, plan review, and inspection in accordance with the requirements of the USBC. A construction permit is required for any work exceeding what is specifically listed above.</i>		
Replace Sleeve			
Replace Seals			

Emergency Equipment Replacement and Repairs. Construction permit applications for emergency fire protection system equipment replacement shall be submitted by the end of the first business day that follows the day such work commenced. No exceptions!



Tampering with Fire Protection Equipment and Systems. In accordance with Section 901.8 of the Fire Prevention Code (as amended by Fairfax County), it shall be unlawful for any person to remove, tamper with, damage, destroy, use without just cause or authorization, or otherwise disturb any fire hydrant, fire detection and alarm system, fire suppression system, or other fire appliance required by this code or installed in any building or structure within the county except for the purposes of extinguishing fire, training, recharging or making necessary repairs, or when approved by the Fire Marshal.

Note: Modification, rehabilitation, or component replacement (repair) involving existing fire protection systems and equipment without benefit of permits required by Section 108 of the USBC and Section 901.2 of the SFPC may be construed as tampering in violation of Section 901.8 of the Fire Prevention Code, which is a Class I Misdemeanor (Code of Virginia §27-100).

For detailed information about construction permits and permit applications, consult our permit requirements web page at: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention/fmpermits.htm>

In summary, as the “Authority Having Jurisdiction” (AHJ), Fairfax County Government requires that a construction permit application be approved by the Office of the Fire Marshal for installations of new fire protection equipment/systems and/or modification, rehabilitation, or component replacement involving existing fire protection equipment/systems, except as otherwise exempted. Specific questions about construction permit requirements related to fire protection equipment/systems may be directed to the Fire Protection Systems Branch at **703-246-4821**, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Thank you for your attention to this important fire protection and life safety issue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Deputy Chief Dereck A. Baker
Office of the Fire Marshal
Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department

