



A publication of Fairfax County, Virginia



# SELF-INSPECTION GUIDELINE **BUSINESS OCCUPANCIES**

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Fire Inspections Branch  
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## OVERVIEW

A business occupancy is typically a building or structure, or portions thereof, used for office, professional or service-type transactions, including storage of records and accounts. Because business occupancies involve a verity of business activities including but not limited to educational occupancies for students above the 12th grade, electronic data processing, research laboratories, radio and television stations, professional service offices, print shops, car wash, and motor vehicle showrooms, the potential fire hazard in these occupancies can be as diverse resulting in a negative impact on life safety.

This publication serves as a guideline for owners, managers, and operators of business occupancies to identify and correct potential fire code violations and life safety hazards through self-inspection.

## INSTRUCTIONS

In addition to the overview of "Legal Responsibility" listed below, this publication is divided into general fire prevention code categories. In each category there are several specific questions relating to fire prevention and life safety. Evaluate the safety of your occupancy by circling "Y" (Yes) or "N" (No) to the right of each question. Circling "N" (No) in response to any question indicates a violation of the Fire Prevention Code and may indicate the presence of an unsafe condition. If you discover a violation or an unsafe condition during the self-inspection process, please take the appropriate action to correct the violation or unsafe condition immediately.

Throughout this publication, there are web-links that will take to you directly to topic-specific publications or guidelines which can provide you with more detailed information not included in this self-inspection guideline. This publication is available online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/prevention).

## LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Owner.** In accordance with Section 110.2 of the Fire Prevention Code, the owner shall be responsible for the safe and proper maintenance of any structure, premises, or lot. In all structures, the fire protection equipment, means of egress, alarms, devices, and safeguards shall be maintained in a safe and proper operating condition as required by the SFPC and applicable standards.

**Person, Firm, Corporation.** In accordance with Section 110.2.1 of the Fire Prevention Code (as amended by Fairfax County), a person, firm, or corporation in charge of or responsible for any building, structure, vehicle, device, other property, substance, material, gas, liquid, chemical, or condition regulated either by this code or by any other ordinance under the Fire Marshal's jurisdiction shall be responsible for compliance with all such code and ordinance provisions and regulations relating thereto.

**Occupant.** In accordance with Section 110.3 of the Fire Prevention Code, if a building occupant creates conditions in violation of the fire prevention code, by virtue of storage, handling, and use of substances, materials, devices, and appliances, such occupant shall be held responsible for the abatement of said hazardous conditions.

## NEED ASSISTANCE?

Call the Fire Inspections Branch at 703-246-4849, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**EMERGENCY EXITS (Means of Egress)**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Are all designated exit doors unlocked and available for immediate use?  | Y / N |
| 2. Do all exit doors fully open without the use of a key, tool, or special knowledge/effort?  | Y / N |
| 3. Are all exit discharge doors free of obstructions or obstacles on the exterior that would prevent the exit door from completely opening and allowing free passage to safety? | Y / N |
| 4. Are all exit discharges adequately illuminated on the exterior to ensure safety at night?  | Y / N |
| 5. Are all aisles, corridors, passageways, and stairs leading to exit doors clear of obstructions or impediments, and free of tripping hazards?                                 | Y / N |
| 6. Are all exit stairways and corridors free of combustible storage and hazardous materials?  | Y / N |
| 7. Are all "EXIT" signs not obstructed, adequately illuminated, clearly visible, and readable?  | Y / N |
| 8. Is all emergency lighting properly working and periodically (monthly) inspected and tested?  | Y / N |
| 9. Where required, is approved <u>panic or fire exit hardware</u> installed on latching exit doors?   | Y / N |

**CROWD MANAGEMENT**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 10. During business hours, are persons inside the building limited to a safe/manageable number?   | Y / N |
| 11. During peak occupancy, are exit passageways, exit aisles, and exit doorways at all times free of obstructions including displays, merchandise, fixtures, patrons, or staff? | Y / N |
| 12. Are all employees, staff, and attendants trained and drilled in the duties to be performed in case of fire, panic, or other emergency?                                      | Y / N |

**FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 13. Are all fire protection systems maintained in an operative condition at all times?   | Y / N |
| 14. Fire alarm and sprinkler systems may require weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual inspection, testing, and maintenance. Have all fire alarm and sprinkler systems been periodically inspected, tested, and maintained in accordance with applicable standards? | Y / N |
| 15. Are all sprinkler heads free of paint, debris, or foreign matter which may prevent operation?  | Y / N |
| 16. Kitchen hood fire suppression systems require inspection, testing, and maintenance every six months. Have all kitchen hood fire suppression systems (if provided) been inspected and tested every six months in accordance with applicable standards?            | Y / N |
| 17. Where provided, is the fire suppression coverage required for cooking appliances located under each commercial kitchen exhaust hood system correct and adequately maintained?  | Y / N |
| 18. Does each fire protection system have a current inspection/service tag attached?   | Y / N |
| 19. Is a clear and unobstructed path provided to all fire protection systems and equipment including access doors, control panels, sprinkler control valves, and manual pull stations?   | Y / N |

**PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 20. Is a portable fire extinguisher located within 75 feet of any portion of the occupancy and within 30 feet of commercial cooking equipment? | Y / N |
| 21. Is each portable fire extinguisher fully charged, mounted 3 to 5 feet above the floor, visible, and readily accessible for use?            | Y / N |
| 22. Is each portable fire extinguisher visually inspected every month and serviced annually?   | Y / N |
| 23. Does each portable fire extinguisher have a <i>current</i> annual service tag attached?  | Y / N |
| 24. Are all staff and attendants trained to use each type of portable fire extinguisher provided?  | Y / N |

**FIRE DOORS, FLOORS, WALLS & CEILINGS**

25. Are all swinging fire doors maintained without door stops or unapproved hold-open devices? Y / N
26. Do all swinging fire doors self-close from any open position and positively latch when closed? (Latching does not mean locking; when latched, the door will not open by itself when closed.) Y / N
27. Is fire-resistive rated construction such as fire-rated drywall (gypsum), masonry, and concrete floors, walls, and ceilings free of holes or penetrations which can spread smoke and/or fire? Y / N
28. Where provided, is all suspended ceiling tile properly installed and in good condition? Y / N

**STORAGE & HOUSEKEEPING**

29. Are equipment rooms, such as mechanical, electrical, and boiler rooms, accessible and free of combustible or hazardous storage? Y / N
30. Is the area around furnaces, boilers, water heaters, and other heat producing devices free of combustible storage and accessible at all times? Y / N
31. Is all inside storage orderly and not located within 2 feet of the ceiling or within 18 inches below or near any sprinkler head? Y / N
32. Is the top of all inside storage maintained to a maximum height of no greater than 12 feet? Y / N
33. Trash, rubbish, and other combustible waste guarded from unwanted ignition and stored in a manner that would not create a fire hazard or nuisance to the occupants? Y / N
34. Are all compressed gas cylinders secured to prevent falling? Y / N
35. Is fueled equipment, such as gasoline-fueled power washers, generators, and gas grills or portable cooking appliances located outside of the building? Y / N
36. Are portable propane cylinders located outside of the building, stored in a safe location away from exit doors and ignition sources, and secured to prevent valve tampering or theft? Y / N
37. In buildings protected with an automatic sprinkler system, are combustible materials not stored or displayed under non-sprinklered eaves, canopies, or other structural projections? Y / N
38. Where provided and approved, are high-piled or high-rack storage arrangements (storage greater than 12 feet in height) maintained as originally approved and in accordance with Chapter 23 of the Fire Prevention Code? Y / N
39. Is the quantity of hazardous materials located inside the building and on the premises limited to the maximum allowable quantity permitted? Y / N

**ELECTRICAL HAZARDS**

40. Are extension cords utilized only in temporary applications? Y / N
41. Where utilized, are extension cords of the heavy-duty type, free of physical damage, and unplugged when not in use? Y / N
42. Multi-plug adapters and power-strips UL-listed and equipped with over-current protection? Y / N
43. Are all electrical circuits, wiring, fixtures, and appliances installed and maintained in compliance with the electrical code? Y / N
44. Are all electrical panels, junction boxes, outlets, and switches have approved cover plates? Y / N
45. Are electric motors free of accumulations of oil, waste, or debris? Y / N
46. A working space of not less than 30 inches in width, 36 inches in depth and 78 inches in height provided in front of all electrical service equipment and breaker panels? Y / N
47. Are all circuit breakers or fuses legibly and durably marked to indicate the circuit controlled? Y / N
48. Is illumination provided in dedicated electrical rooms and in rooms equipped with electrical control equipment and panels? Y / N

**HEATING, VENTILATION & COOKING**

49. Are permanently installed fuel-fired heating appliances, such as furnaces, boilers, or water heaters, properly maintained and correctly vented to the outside of the building? Y / N
50. Are portable electric space heaters located a minimum of 10 feet from combustible material and plugged directly into a wall outlet? Y / N
51. Is each portable electric space heater UL-listed, equipped with a tip-over automatic shut-off switch and unplugged at the close of business and/or when not in use? Y / N
52. Is all mechanical and ventilating equipment free of accumulations of dust and waste material? Y / N
53. Are all cooking operations that produce heat, steam, smoke, or grease-laden vapor located under an approved commercial kitchen exhaust hood and duct system? Y / N
54. Where provided, is each commercial kitchen exhaust hood and duct system free of accumulations of grease and residue and periodically cleaned to bare metal? Y / N
55. Where provided, is the fork-lift battery charging station properly ventilated to the outside? Y / N

**CANDLES, OPEN FLAME & SMOKING**

56. Are aisles, exits and areas where occupants stand free of candles and open flame devices? Y / N
57. Is the open flame adequately protected in a noncombustible, stable, non-tipping holder and kept away from all combustibles? Y / N
58. Are suitable noncombustible ash trays or receptacles available in designated smoking areas? Y / N
59. Are lighted matches, cigarettes, cigars, ashes or embers discarded in a safe manner so as not to cause a fire? Y / N

**BUILDING & EMERGENCY VEHICLE ACCESS**

60. Is the building address posted and clearly visible from the street? Y / N
61. Does the [fire department building access](#) key box have the correct keys inside so the fire department can gain entry into the building in the event of an emergency after hours? Y / N
62. Are all fire hydrants and fire department connections not blocked and readily accessible? Y / N
63. Are all designated fire lanes and vehicle entrances to the premises maintained clear of obstructions including storage, merchandise, and vehicles? Y / N

**PERMITS, DOCUMENTATION & EMERGENCY PLANNING**

64. Are all legally required permits posted in a conspicuous location available for inspection? Y / N
65. Are Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for hazardous materials readily available on site? Y / N
66. Are records of inspections, tests, and maintenance of all fire protection systems and emergency lighting systems kept on premises available for inspection? Y / N
67. If applicable, is a cleaning schedule for all commercial kitchen exhaust hood and duct systems posted on each hood? Y / N
68. If required, is a copy of the Fire Marshal-approved mercantile [Fire Safety & Evacuation Plan](#) available for reference and review by employees and inspection by the Fire Marshal? Y / N
69. Are employee fire extinguisher and emergency response training records kept on premises? Y / N
70. For high-piled or high-rack storage arrangements, is all approved construction documentation including fire sprinkler drawings and storage area floor plans readily available for inspection? Y / N

Fairfax County is committed to a policy of non-discrimination in all county programs, services, and activities. Upon request, the Office of the Fire Marshal can provide documents and publications in alternative formats and in different languages. Please call 703-246-4753 (TTY: 711 or 1-800-828-1120) or write us at the following address: Office of the Fire Marshal, 10700 Page Avenue, Fairfax, VA 22030. Allow at least seven to ten working days for preparation of material.