



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

---

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 5, 2022

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

**FROM:** Deputy Chief John L. Walser  
Fairfax County Fire Official

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

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise all parties involved with the installation, alteration, repair, modification, rehabilitation, inspection, 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 memo is in accordance with the *2018 Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC)*.

**Referenced Standards.** Section 101.6 of the *2018 Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC)* specifies that provisions of Chapter 1 of the USBC supersedes conflicting provisions of the codes and standards, including, but not limited to, NFPA 13, NFPA 14, NFPA 20, and NFPA 72.

**Permit Required.** In accordance with Sections 108 and 901.3 of the USBC, a construction permit is required for the installation, modification, and rehabilitation, involving the following fire protection equipment and systems, except where otherwise exempted:

- Fire alarm systems
- Fire detection systems
- Fire suppression systems
- Smoke control systems
- Fire protection supervisory systems
- Elevator fire safety control systems
- Access or egress control systems or delayed egress locking or latching systems
- Fire dampers
- Door control 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, notification 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, 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 a permit and inspection from the Fire Protection Systems Branch of the Office of the Fire Marshal.

**NOTE:** Any replacement of a pressure reducing valve or device requires a permit and inspection.

### **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 Gauges	Restock Spare Sprinklers	Sight Glass Replacement
Accelerator	Air Compressor		
Replace Sprinkler Head	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.		
Backflow Prevention Device Installation	A backflow prevention device (BPD) inspection does not require construction permit from the Office of the Fire Marshal; however, a construction permit is required by Land Development Services.		

#### **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 Repairs
Replace Duct Detector	Replace Tamper Switch	Replace Battery	Replace Initiating Device
Replace Smoke Detector (base/head)	<i>In addition to the restrictions above, maintenance and repairs made with non-duplicate, non-exact components are 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.</i>		
Replace Heat Detector (head/base)			

#### **Fire Pump Related**

Replace Stuffing/Package	Replace Casing Gasket	Remove Obstructions	Install New Gauges
Replace Wearing Rings	Clean Motor (windings)	Diesel Ventilation, Battery	Heat/Light in Pump Room
Re-align Shift	<i>In addition to the restrictions noted, maintenance and repairs made with non-duplicate, non-exact components are 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.</i>		
Replace Sleeve			
Replace Seals			

**Emergency Equipment Replacement/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.

**Tampering with Fire Protection Equipment and Systems.** In accordance with Section 901.8 of the *2018 Fire Prevention Code*, 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 Office of the Fire Marshal.

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

For detailed information about construction permits and permit applications, consult the permit requirements web page at: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire-ems/fire-marshal/installation-permit-requirements>.

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 installation 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 code compliance issue.