

Preparing for Annual Fire Safety Inspections

Fire safety inspections are required on all commercial buildings and structures as per Section 38 (Fire Protection & Prevention) as outlined in the CITY OF PALM BEACH GARDENS CODE OF ORDINANCES. These inspections shall be performed on an annual basis for the purposes of identifying and correcting all life safety hazards associated with the prevention, detection, and suppression of fire, as well as exiting. Occupancies such as places of assembly (Hotels, theaters, etc.), hospitals, large mercantile occupancies, assisted living facilities/group homes, and industrial occupancies may be inspected semi-annually, or quarterly depending on the occupancy. Fire safety inspections address four main areas. 1) Hazards associated with the ignition of a fire, 2) Proper testing and maintenance of fire suppression & detection equipment (sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, commercial hoods, fire alarms, etc.), 3) Proper testing and/or maintenance of equipment associated with exiting the building or structure in the event of a fire. (Exit signs, emergency lighting, controlled access doors, etc.), and 4) Ensuring that the means of egress is clearly marked, lit, and accessible.

Hazards Associated with the Ignition of Fire

- **Improper use of extension cords:**
In general, extension cords are not permitted to be used as permanent wiring. Extension cords that are damaged, spliced, placed under rugs, coiled, fastened with staples/ties, or not of sufficient amperage are especially dangerous.
- **Using outlet multipliers:**
Outlet multipliers with surge protection are acceptable. It is dangerous to overload receptacles.
- **Improper storage of chemicals:**
Chemicals should be stored according to manufacturer's recommendations; improper use of containers, poor ventilation, and storing with incompatible chemicals can all result in a fire.
- **Accumulation of waste and combustible material:**
Excessive accumulation of waste and combustible materials can significantly increase the fire load, in addition, rags with cleaning solvents, paints, and lacquers if not stored properly can self ignite.
- **Heat source too close to combustible materials:**
Transformers, coffee pots, microwaves, space heaters, and ovens all must have adequate space from combustibles.

Fire Protection & Detection Equipment

- **Sprinkler Systems**
Shall be maintained in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 25), The Standard for Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water Based Fire Protection Systems. Most systems are inspected quarterly, in addition to one annual inspection. Fire Inspectors will require a copy of this annual report at the time of the inspection. All sprinkler systems are required to be monitored.
- **Fire Alarm Systems**
Shall be maintained in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 72), The National Fire Alarm Code. Depending on the type of system, inspections may be required quarterly, semi-annually or annually. Fire Inspectors will require a copy of the applicable test report, as well as a copy of the alarm-monitoring contract.
- **Fire Extinguishers**
Shall be installed & maintained in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 10), The Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers. Fire extinguishers are required to be inspected annually by a licensed technician. They must be mounted, and visible.
- **Commercial Hoods**
Shall be installed & maintained in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 96), The Standard for Ventilation Control & Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations. Commercial hood systems are required to be tested/maintenance either annually or semi-annually by a licensed technician. Fire Inspectors will require a copy of the test/maintenance papers.
- **Generators**
A licensed technician must test generators annually; in addition they must have records on site for start up and monthly transfers. Fire Inspectors will request a copy of the test papers.
- **Fire Pumps**
Fire pumps must be tested annually by a licensed technician. Fire Inspectors will request a copy of the test papers.
- **Fire Suppression Systems**
All fire suppression systems, clean agent systems etc. Must be tested annually by a licensed technician. Fire Inspectors will request a copy of the test papers.

Proper testing and/or maintenance of equipment associated with exiting the building.

- **Emergency Lighting**
All emergency lights must have a battery backup.
- **Exit Signs**
Must be visible in both the normal and emergency mode. All exit signs must have a battery backup.
- **Controlled Access Doors**
Must release upon activation of the fire alarm or power failure.

Means of Egress

- All exits must be clearly marked.
- All exits must be unobstructed.
- All exits must be unlocked while the building is occupied.
- All exits have the proper locking devices.
- All exits are properly lit.