



Highlands Fire Prevention Bureau

Fire Safety Inspection Process

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Why Do We Conduct Inspections?

The MISSION of the Highlands Fire Prevention Division is to enhance public safety, fire hazard awareness and reduce fire department operational risks through fire safety inspections, public education and fire safety advocacy. A strong Fire Safety Inspection program is an effective and cost-efficient method to obtain our GOAL: Protecting life and property. The standard utilized by the Fire Service to identify and correct issues found during an inspection is the **New Jersey Uniform Fire Code**.

The **FIRE CODE** was adopted under the AUTHORITY of the STATE UNIFORM FIRE SAFETY ACT (N.J.S.A 52:27D-192 et. seq.). The Uniform Fire Code has two sections:

- A maintenance code based on the 2015 International Fire Code, New Jersey edition.
- The Uniform Fire Safety Act which addresses updating existing buildings to current fire protection standards.

While some people may look at the fire and life-safety inspection process negatively, these inspections benefit the building/business owners, as well as those who use the building, by offering:

- A safer working/living environment for employees/residents.
- A safer building for unfamiliar occupants (visitors, shoppers, clients, etc.).
- Business and job security. Up to 80 percent of all small businesses that experience a large fire never reopen; this not only affects the building/business owner, but also results in the loss of jobs. Of the businesses that do reopen, many lose much of their customer base due to prolonged absence of production or service.
- A better-maintained building for improved resale value. It is commonplace for buyers to hire a company to inspect the building prior to purchase to identify potential hidden costs related to fire and life safety.
- A possible reduction in insurance premiums. Some items may be required by both the fire department and your insurance carrier, such as annual fire-sprinkler and fire-alarm inspections verifying proper system maintenance. Many insurance carriers give businesses premium reductions for properly installed and maintained fire-protection systems.

What To Expect During a Fire Inspection?

The inspector will introduce him or herself, present identification and inform you of the purpose of the inspection, i.e. annual fire inspection. The inspector will ask you for any required paperwork such as a sprinkler and/or fire alarm inspection report. The inspector will then proceed to inspect the entire occupancy. A representative of the occupant is requested to accompany the inspector. The representative should have keys or other methods to access all areas to facilitate the inspection. During the inspection, the inspector will point out violations (if any) and corrective requirements.

After the inspection is complete you will receive a written report of all violations found and an "Order to Correct" notice. Normally you will have 30 days to correct all violations. In the case of certain serious violations, you may be given a shorter time period, typically 7 days to correct the serious violation. If the violation is deemed to be an "Imminent Hazard", the premises may be closed down until the hazard is corrected. The Fire Prevention Bureau will re-inspect on or about 30 days after issuance of the violation notice. It is expected that all violations will have been corrected at that time. Failure to correct all violations may result in the issuance of a penalty. If all violations have been corrected, a "Certificate of Satisfactory Compliance" will be sent to you.

When Do We Conduct Inspections?

Under the UNIFORM FIRE CODE some businesses are identified as a LIFE HAZARD USE (LHU). These BUSINESSES are REQUIRED to be REGISTERED with the STATE OF NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY.

Inspections of these REGISTERED BUSINESSES are REGULATED by the CODE and REQUIRE an ANNUAL, BI-ANNUAL or QUARTERLY inspection, based on the HAZARD CLASSIFICATION.

Businesses NOT REGISTERED as an "LHU" are inspected ANNUALLY or PERIODICALLY under Borough Ordinance.

It is required that **ALL** businesses register with the Borough of Highlands when first established or at the change of occupancy. The following are required as soon as all Construction (UCC) permits have been closed out.

- Mercantile License application.
- Business Certificate of Occupancy application.

What Do We Look For When We Visit Your Establishment?

KEY ELEMENTS that are IMPERATIVE to the LIFE SAFETY of an establishment are;

- *FIRE DETECTION SYSTEMS*-Smoke detectors, Heat sensors & Manual fire alarm pull stations are a few components of this type of system. REQUIRED systems, must be SERVICED/INSPECTED ANNUALLY.
- *FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS*-Sprinklers, Standpipes, Fire Pumps, Fire extinguishers, and Kitchen Hood Suppression all fall into this category of a Fire Suppression System.
- *SPRINKLER, STANDPIPES and FIRE EXTINGUISHERS* are REQUIRED to be SERVICED/INSPECTED ANNUALLY.
- *KITCHEN HOOD SUPPRESSION* is REQUIRED to be SERVICED/ INSPECTED BI-ANNUALLY.
- ALL SERVICING & INSPECTION ON THESE SYSTEMS REQUIRE AN INSPECTION/SERVICE REPORT FROM THE SERVICING VENDOR AND SHALL BE FORWARDED TO THE FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION.
- *ELECTRICAL & MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT*-Electric panels, Extension & multi-cord power strips, GFI & GFCI,
- *ELEVATORS* test and service records for elevators.
- *EMERGENCY GENERATORS* test and service records for emergency generators.
- *DRILLS and TRAINING* – Documentation of fire drills and fire safety training of staff.
- *MEANS OF EGRESS*-Entryways, Exits, Aisles, Hallways, Corridors, Stairs & Stairwells, fire escapes, are all COMPONENTS that make up a MEANS OF EGRESS.
- *EXITS*-should be identified with EXIT SIGNS
- *TRAVELWAYS*-to the EXIT should have EMERGENCY LIGHTING should the power fail
- All EXITS AND TRAVEL WAYS must be accessible and unobstructed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

These identified COMPONENTS shall be **FREE & UNOBSTRUCTED** for **SAFE & IMMEDIATE USE**.

All vendors servicing and inspecting these systems are required to be either certified or licensed by the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs or the Division of Fire Safety. <http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dfs/>

Storage-two key words to remember, **NEAT & ORDERLY**.

- If a sprinkler system is present in the building, storage can be maintained to a height of 18 inches below the sprinkler heads.
- If a sprinkler system is not in the building, storage must be maintained to a height of 24 inches below the ceiling.
- Storage shall not create a hazard & distances from mechanical appliances shall be observed (36 inches).
- 30 inches between all electrical service equipment.
- Storage of combustible/hazardous materials must be maintained in an orderly fashion, away from flame-producing appliances. Any combustible or flammable liquids must be in approved containers and storage cabinets. There are specific limits on the amount of combustible and flammable liquids by type of occupancy, as well as specific storage arrangements. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) must be provided.

Information Regarding Fire Safety Permits

The NJ Uniform Fire Act provides that certain hazardous activities need a permit to be issued by the local Fire Official before commencement of the activity. Permits are occupancy and event specific. Blanket permits are not issued. While the list of permit uses is extensive, the most common permits issued are for activities, such as: tents, bonfires, outdoor propane usage, torch/flame applied roofing, tar kettles, welding or cutting operations, kitchen hood suppression systems and so forth.

Some Other Fire Safety Key Elements On The Exterior Of The Building We May Be Looking For?

- Fire Lane / Fire Zone requirements for unobstructed access to your business in the event of an emergency.
- Signage to identify specific locations, hazards materials, and fire safety systems are clearly visible.
- Identifying and numbering for street addresses, exterior stairwells, marinas and other requirements.
- Access to utilities for emergency shut off.
- Fire Hydrant and water supply locations.
- Fire Department Connections (FDC)
- Fire Department Pre-Planning Information.
- Combustible materials that will cause or contribute to the spread of fire.

Fire Department Master-Keyed Lockboxes – AKA Knox Rapid Entry System

There are also items that need to be addressed to help emergency-response personnel do their jobs better, including making sure the building address is clearly visible from the street, and that access to the building is not restricted. National codes now require that buildings allow fire departments safe and immediate access. Where access to or within a structure or an area is restricted because of secured openings or where immediate access is necessary for life saving or firefighting purposes, the Fire Code Official is authorized to require a key box be installed in an approved location. The most common means of doing this is with fire department lockboxes. These are special fire department master-keyed lockboxes, mounted to the exterior of the building.

The building owner provides building keys that the fire department puts into these lockboxes for future use. The lockbox should be readily accessible to the fire department. If you've changed locks in your building and have a fire department lockbox, make sure you have extra keys available at the time of inspection for the fire department to replace the current keys in the lockbox.

Highlands Fire Department has chosen Knox Rapid Entry System with over 14,000 public agencies as their choice for safe and secure rapid entry.

- *RAPID ACCESS* - Eliminate barriers and allow first responders to quickly gain access to secured properties when time matters most.
- *PROTECTION* Protect property, inventory, and thousands of dollars in investments from fire and water damage by providing rapid emergency access to first responders.
- *COST* Eliminate costly repair from forced entry with Knox one-time, low cost investment.
- *LOW MAINTENANCE* All products are Built Knox-Rugged to require little maintenance and retain their operational integrity even under extreme weather conditions.
- *SECURITY* Only your local fire department has the authority to access your Knox products.

Ordering information on Knox Box Rapid Entry System can be found online at: <https://www.knoxbox.com/>
Standard Knoxbox 3200: https://www.knoxbox.com/KNOX/media/KNOX/SpecSheet_KnoxBox3200_W_1.pdf?ext=.pdf

For any questions or additional information please contact:

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