

Fire Safety and You

Information about your responsibilities as a building owner under the British Columbia Fire Code

Building owners are legally responsible for fulfilling certain requirements of the British Columbia Fire Code. **Ignorance of the law is not a defence. You could receive fines or be subject to legal action if you don't comply.**

Division C, Part 2, Section 2.2, Sentence 2.2.1.1 of the code states, "Unless otherwise specified, the owner or the owner's authorized agent shall be responsible for carrying out the provisions of this code."

This booklet includes both general responsibilities and those that are specific to particular building types or uses.

Making sure your building is free of fire hazards isn't just common sense – it's the law.

TYPES OF BUILDINGS COVERED IN THIS BOOKLET

Other than private family dwellings, all buildings in the City of Surrey are subject to fire inspections and are responsible for meeting certain standards under the B.C. Fire Code. This includes the occupancies below.

Handouts for each occupancy can be downloaded from the Fire Inspection Guidelines section at www.surrey.ca/fireservice.



Assembly occupancies, including halls, churches, restaurants & pubs



Daycares & preschools



Hospitals & health care facilities



Manufacturers, woodworking shops & spray operations



Multi-family residential



Offices



Retail & commercial



Schools & educational facilities



Service stations, including gas stations & automotive repair shops



Warehouses

8767 132 Street, Surrey B.C., V3W 4P1
Fire Prevention: 604-543-6780
fireprevention@surrey.ca
www.surrey.ca/fireservice



SIX MOST COMMON FIRE CODE VIOLATIONS



PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- Required in all buildings except dwellings.
- Must be located adjacent to corridors or aisles that provide access to exits. Must be mounted in a visible location, accessible, routinely serviced and contain a fully supply of the extinguishing substance.
- Must be listed by a recognizing testing agency and in full working condition with no damage, corrosion, leakage, malfunctioning parts or clogged nozzles.
- Are subject to maintenance at least once a year and must have a secure tag or label listing the month and year the maintenance was performed, by whom and if recharging was performed.
- Must each have a permanent record with the maintenance date, examiner's name and brief description of work or hydrostatic test.
- Must have hydrostatic testing carried out at the following intervals:
 - Five years: water or antifreeze (cartridge operated or stored pressure), wetting agent or foam.
 - Twelve years: dry chemical (stored pressure, cartridge or cylinder operated) and dry powder (cartridge or cylinder operated).
- Must be serviced and tagged yearly by a certified technician.



EMERGENCY LIGHTING

- May be provided by battery packs with remote and attached heads, or by emergency generators that will illuminate specified A/C fixtures or remote light heads. Battery packs must be regularly serviced and for generators, a fuel supply of at least eight hours must be on hand.
- Lighting must be operational and have no visible damage.



FIRE SEPARATIONS

- Buildings must have no holes or openings in drywall, ceilings or other fire separations.



FIRE SAFETY PLANS

Must include:

- the emergency procedures to be used in case of fire (including sounding the fire alarm, notifying the fire department and evacuation procedures) .
- the appointment and training of supervisory staff to carry out fire safety duties.
- documents, including diagrams, showing the type, location and operation of building fire emergency systems
- the holding of fire drills.
- the control of fire hazards.
- the inspection and maintenance of facilities.
- a record of inspections, maintenance procedures and tests must be kept for the last two years.



EXIT SIGNS

Exit signs must be installed over every required exit door (other than the main entrance to a room or building) in the following cases:

- in buildings more than two storeys tall
- in buildings used by more than 150 people
- in corridors more than 25 metres long in health care or correctional facilities
- in exit corridors where a change of direction is required
- in areas with a fire escape that is a required exist
- in all public halls and theatres

The signs must be visible and remain illuminated at all times the building is occupied.



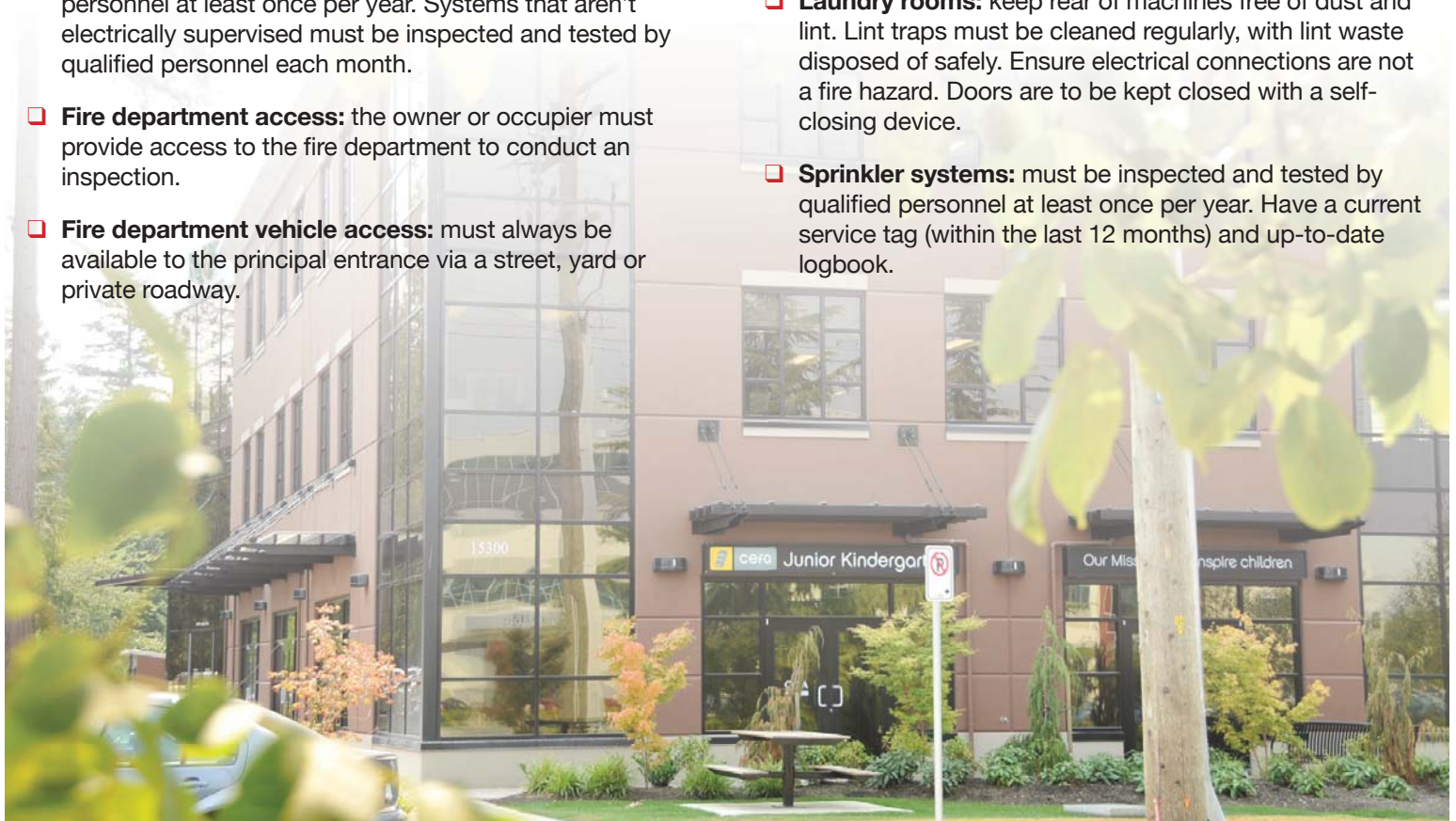
EXIT PASSAGES

- Passages to exits must be clear and unobstructed at all times.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR BUILDING OWNERS

The following responsibilities are common to all buildings under the B.C. Fire Code, other than dwellings:

- ❑ **Address:** must be visible from road and lane, free from foliage and should be in a contrasting colour.
- ❑ **Evacuation plans:** recommended for all buildings with fire alarms.
- ❑ **Exit corridors:** must lead to an approved exit, such as an exterior door or exit stair shaft. The route must be free of obstruction. Exterior passageways and stairs in occupied buildings must be free of snow and ice and have handrails and stair treads.
- ❑ **Exit doors:** must not be locked or blocked from either the inside or outside. They must be unlocked from the inside when the building is occupied. They must be equipped with latching hardware that will release when a force of 20 pounds or less is applied. Stairwell doors must be equipped with self-closing and latching devices that latch the door shut when released. Draperies and mirrors are not permitted.
- ❑ **Fire alarm systems:** must have a working A/C power-on bulb, and be kept in good working condition with no audible or visual damage. They must have a current service tag (dated within the last twelve months) and up-to-date logbook. Electrically supervised alarms (with a trouble alarm and light) must be inspected and tested by qualified personnel at least once per year. Systems that aren't electrically supervised must be inspected and tested by qualified personnel each month.
- ❑ **Fire department access:** the owner or occupier must provide access to the fire department to conduct an inspection.
- ❑ **Fire department vehicle access:** must always be available to the principal entrance via a street, yard or private roadway.
- ❑ **Fire doors:** must not be blocked or wedged open, including stairwell doors.
- ❑ **Fire hydrants:** must be accessible, free of damage and serviced within the specified date. Private hydrants require annual service, with records kept on site.
- ❑ **Fire separations:** must have no holes or openings that compromise their purpose.
- ❑ **Outdoor storage areas:** must be in good condition and arranged in a manner that minimizes fire risk.
- ❑ **Garbage disposal:** commercial containers must be located six metres from combustible buildings. If kept inside, commercial containers should have tight-fitting lids and be kept in fire-separated rooms.
- ❑ **Storage areas:** must be kept free of excessive clutter, with aisle widths of at least 36 inches in larger rooms.
- ❑ **Mechanical rooms** (such as boiler, furnace or electrical rooms): must provide clear access to equipment, and, in the case of boiler rooms and electrical vaults, must contain no storage. Distribution panels should have a clearance of at least 18 to 24 inches. In the breaker box, all switches and/or fuses should be identified, including the fire alarm breaker. Doors must remain closed, with self-closing devices in boiler rooms.
- ❑ **Laundry rooms:** keep rear of machines free of dust and lint. Lint traps must be cleaned regularly, with lint waste disposed of safely. Ensure electrical connections are not a fire hazard. Doors are to be kept closed with a self-closing device.
- ❑ **Sprinkler systems:** must be inspected and tested by qualified personnel at least once per year. Have a current service tag (within the last 12 months) and up-to-date logbook.



FIRE INSPECTION PROCESS

As required by the *Fire Services Act*, Surrey Fire Services Inspectors will visit your business to perform a fire safety inspection to ensure your business meets the BC Fire Code.

These inspections occur during regular business hours. The Inspectors will be able to answer your questions about fire safety related to your business.

Business owners are responsible for complying with the BC Fire Code. If you are not sure how to comply, seek professional advice.

ROUTINE INSPECTION

This **free** inspection is conducted as a part of a regular system of inspections and will be completed by an inspector when required.

Inspectors will check that:

- Fire and life safety systems have been inspected, tested and maintained, and
- Business operations meet the BC Fire Code.

If your business meets the BC Fire Code, no further action is required until your next inspection.

If your business does not comply:

- You will receive an Order to Comply with a timeline to correct the deficiencies.
- A re-inspection will be required.

RE-INSPECTION

Re-inspections will take place based on details in the Order to Comply.

To achieve compliance, all deficiencies in the Order to Comply must be resolved, and your business must meet the BC Fire Code prior to the re-inspection.

There is a fee for each re-inspection, and they will continue until all requirements are met.



DOES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE A SPECIAL HAZARD?

If your business contains or involves one of these special hazards, it should be addressed prior to establishing your business by consulting a professional to advise you on what is required to comply with the BC Fire Code.

- Indoor and outdoor storage of combustibile products and dangerous goods.
- Storage, handling, use and processing of flammable liquids and combustibile liquid.
- Hazardous processes and operations.

If you have questions about these special hazards, please contact Surrey Fire Services Fire Prevention at 604-543-6780 or fireprevention@surrey.ca.

Additional detail and examples of special hazards can also be found in the Commercial Fire Inspections PDF posted in the Fire Inspection Guidelines section at www.surrey.ca/fireservice.

