

# **FIRE INSPECTIONS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Fire Extinguisher Cabinets.....	2
2. Fire Protection Certification .....	2
3. Knox Box Guidelines .....	2
4. Residential Inspections and Fees .....	2
5. Rubbish Chutes .....	3
6. Dumpsters in Parking Garages.....	3
7. Garage Storage .....	4
8. Exit Signs.....	4
9. Exit Door Hardware .....	4
10. Egress Continuity .....	5
11. Stairway Labeling .....	5
12. Fire Department Connection (FDC) Labeling.....	5
13. Kitchen Hoods .....	5
14. Interior Building Labeling for Specific Rooms .....	6
15. Fire Pits and Outdoor Burning .....	6
16. BBQ's on Balconies and Patios .....	6
17. Smoke Alarms and CO Alarms.....	6

1. **Fire Extinguisher Cabinets:**

- a. If a fire extinguisher cabinet has breakaway glass or plastic, it is allowed.
- b. If a fire extinguisher cabinet has breakaway glass or any other locking mechanism, it shall have an emergency means of access per the fire code, such as a striking rod.
- c. If the fire extinguisher cabinet has 'scored' plexi-glass and can be safely accessed without a striking rod, ***per the manufactures design***, then that would be acceptable.

2. **Fire Protection Certification** : For Fire and Life Safety Systems

- a. The FD has a certification process in place for all fire protection systems, such as fire alarms, standpipes, sprinklers, fire doors, trash chutes, fire escapes, fire pumps, emergency generators and other systems.
- b. The process is based on NFPA Standards for each system for maintenance, inspection and testing.
- c. System tests vary by equipment, with intervals ranging from 6 months, 1 year and 5 years on average.
- d. **All** tests and certifications by licensed contractors for fire protection systems must be submitted electronically using The Compliance Engine website at [www.thecomplianceengine.com](http://www.thecomplianceengine.com).
- e. This is a program operated by a private company that will track all certifications on a website which will be accessible by FD personnel to look up certification dates.
- f. Failure of a Responsible Party to have the contractor enter certification info into The Compliance Engine website is cause for re-inspection and possible re-inspection fee.

3. **Knox Box Guidelines:** Knox Boxes are heavy duty key boxes attached to buildings with keys or codes inside used to enter that particular building.

- a. Knox Boxes shall be required if the building is equipped with a fire alarm, fire sprinklers, and gated entries or where the inspector feels access is impeded or delayed.

Go to [www.knoxbox.com](http://www.knoxbox.com) to order a Knox Box online

4. **Residential Inspections and Fees:** The California Health and Safety Code, Sec. 13146.2 (a) mandates that residential inspections of buildings with three or more units be completed annually, and (b) provides the City legal authority to charge property owners to recover reasonable costs for providing these annual

inspections. Examples of residential buildings include apartments, condos, hotels, motels and boarding houses.

The following summarizes the fee program:

- a. Residential inspection fees are approved by city council.
- b. The fees are based on the number of units per individual building. An owner's unit counts as part of the total residential units.
- c. The initial inspection conducted generates a fee.
- d. If compliance is not made after the first re-inspection, then additional re-inspection fees will be charged.
- e. Failure to comply can lead to additional re-inspection fees and referral to the City Prosecutor.

5. **Rubbish Chutes:**

- a. Rubbish chutes shall be inspected and maintained annually and a written record shall be provided. NFPA 82 10.2.2, 10.2.2.1, and 10.2.3.
- b. Certifications by vendors shall be submitted on The Compliance Engine website at [www.thecomplianceengine.com](http://www.thecomplianceengine.com).
- c. Certification labels should be posted on rubbish doors and on the closure at the bottom of the chute.
- d. Sprinklers should be installed in the chute at various levels, including the top and the bottom of the chute.

6. **Dumpsters in Parking Garages:** Dumpsters in or near buildings pose a hazard due the large fire load that they may contain.

As such, the following guide shall be adhered to:

- a. Dumpsters inside parking garages or under any structures shall be removed unless they are protected by fire sprinklers (CFC 304.3.3).
- b. Dumpsters are also not allowed within 5 feet from the structure unless protected by a sprinkler.
- c. To install sprinklers for this situation, the property must submit plans to City Hall, Fire Plan Check for sprinkler head installation over the dumpster; upon approval a permit is obtained.
- d. Dumpster shall be removed or placed more than 5 feet away from openings and combustible roof eaves.

7. **Garage Storage**: Storage in garages can present hazards.

The following guidelines shall apply:

- a. 2A-10BC fire extinguishers are required in parking garages for every 75' of travel distance.
- b. Large parking structures under or attached to residential buildings shall have storage of materials that is orderly and stable. Combustibles shall be separated from ignition sources. (CFC 315.3)
- c. Storage must be at least 24 in. below the ceiling in non-sprinklered areas, and 18 in. below the ceiling in sprinklered areas. (CFC 315.3.1)
- d. Storage should be limited to individual areas designated by parking stalls or other identified means.

8. **Exit Signs**

- a. Exit signs must be illuminated at all times. CFC 1011.
- b. Exit signs can be hard-wired with battery backup
- c. There are two types of exit signs approved without electric power or battery power:
  - Self-luminous – has its own power usually from a nuclear based material; these signs last 10 years (which is labeled on the sign) and are thick with some depth
  - Photoluminescence – absorbs light from a nearby light source; it will stay illuminated for a period after the light is removed; this sign also has some depth
  - Both signs must meet UL924 listings

9. **Exit Door Hardware**:

- a. When replacement of hardware is necessary due to code violation, the new hardware must be single-action lever type; examples of violations include, double-sided deadbolts, thumb turns where the door or gate opens inward, where a key or special knowledge is required or where two separate actions are necessary to exit.
- b. Panic hardware is required on Assembly occupancies, which serves 50 or more people.
- c. Delayed egress, access control doors, magnetic doors, or electronically controlled doors which prevent free exiting from the facility must be approved by the Fire Department.

10. **Egress Continuity:**

- a. The path of egress from an exit shall continue uninterrupted or unobstructed to a public way; examples of violations include, chained gates, bars on windows without releases, previously mentioned hardware violations and any storage in pathway.

11. **Stairway Labeling:** Stairway labeling and identification is important for emergency operations.

The following shall apply:

- a. Stairway numbering must be maintained if it was required at the time the building was built.
- b. Buildings 4 stories or more are required to have stairs labeled. See established FP 1.033 Requirement Guidelines for Stairway Numbering.
- c. If not required, stairway numbering can be recommended for buildings under 4 stories.

12. **Fire Department Connection (FDC) Labeling:** FDC labeling and identification is important for emergency situations. FDC includes standpipes and/or sprinklers.

The following shall apply:

- a. Fire Department connections are usually located on the address side of the building or property served and shall be clearly identified as to the address or building it supplies (per FP Requirement 1.011).
- b. Signage for an FDC should include the address, areas served, type of system or systems and/or stairwells served. (FP Requirement 1.011A)

13. **Kitchen Hoods:**

- a. Commercial kitchen hoods need to be the UL 300 type.
- b. Hood system certifications are required every 6 months.
- c. Kitchen hood systems at non-commercial assemblies, such as church or meeting halls, need to have the system maintained as originally designed.
  - The use of the key-operated locking device is revocable by the building official for due cause.

14. **Interior Building Labeling for Specific Rooms:**

- a. For Fire Department access and operations, rooms containing controls for air conditioning, sprinklers, or other fire detection, suppression or other

control elements shall be required to be identified. This also includes utilities, such as gas, water, electric and boilers. (CFC 509.1)

- b. Room labeling for laundry or trash and other special use areas can be requested.

**15. Fire Pits and Outdoor Burning:**

- a. Bonfires or any type of outdoor burning is not allowed without a permit from FP.
- b. Fire pits or “chimeneas” type equipment for outdoor burning on private property are not regulated; these set ups usually have to a screen type cover to prevent ashes from spreading and need to be used according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- c. Wood is the only thing allowed to burn in this equipment.
- d. Burning trash or leaves is not allowed under any circumstances.
- e. Failure of an RP to stop illegal outdoor burning may result in a citation from the Arson Unit or PD.

**16. BBQ’s on Balconies and Patios:**

- a. FP Bulletin 11-01 allows all barbeques on balconies, decks, and patios, even if they use LPG.
- b. However, LPG tanks are not allowed **inside** buildings. (LBMC 18.48.730)
- c. Balconies, decks and patios are considered outside.

**17. Smoke Alarms and CO Alarms**

The Fire Department has established specific guidelines for inspections related to smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms for R-1 and R-2 Occupancies, such as hotels, motels, apartments, and condominiums,.

Code references:

- **SMOKE ALARMS** – Required in sleeping rooms and areas giving access to sleeping rooms within each unit on every level. **CFC 907.2.11.**
- **CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS** – Building with an attached garage or fuel-burning appliance shall be equipped with carbon monoxide detectors, located in areas giving access to sleeping areas within each unit on every level. **CBC 420.6.2.3.**

January 2017