



Town of Bellingham Fire Department

OFFICE OF THE

Fire Prevention Division

fireprevention@bellinghamma.org

Fire Safety Inspection Guidelines for Commercial Properties

(Massachusetts Fire Prevention Regulations 527 CMR 1.00, MGL Chapter 148)

FIRE PREVENTION CHECKLIST- To review prior to your inspection.

- 1. Is the address of your property clearly visible and marked in large numbers that can be easily seen from the street?**

Having buildings or suites visibly lettered and numbered ensures that responders in an emergency situation can readily find the location in a timely manner.

Address numbers shall contrast with their background. Numerals shall be not less than four inches in height for residential and at least six inches in height for all other buildings, structures, or portions thereof. No script numerals shall be used. For buildings not visible from the street a post or sign on the roadway shall indicate the property number.

In Multi occupancy commercial buildings, all front and rear doors must be labeled with the name of the occupancy in six inches high contrasting letters. In lieu of the labeling the front door, overhead signage may be accepted.

- 2. Are the Doors leading to the Exterior numbered?**

Numbering all doors leading to the exterior serves two purposes, #1 it speeds hazard mitigation by allowing firefighters to reach any issue within the building quicker and #2 aids in Firefighter location if they become lost or trapped in a fire.

All doors leading to the exterior should be number with 4" minimum numbers, 12" off of the ground on the interior and exterior. Numbering should start with the door to the far left of the front of the building and continue clockwise around the entire building. For multi occupancy buildings, numbering is still to be done clockwise around the entire building not for individual units. For glass doors ensure the numbers do not overlap, which could cause confusion in identifying the number.

- 3. Is there at least one fire extinguisher within 75 feet travel distance from anywhere in the business?**

This ensures that you or your employees have to travel no more than 75 feet to get to a location of a fire extinguisher and that the extinguisher can be quickly accessed.

4. Is the fire extinguisher mounted in a visible and accessible location?

Ensuring that the fire extinguisher(s) is mounted visibly saves confusion in an emergency. Also, the fire extinguisher should be mounted near an exit so if you decide not to attempt to extinguish the fire, you can quickly exit the building.

Extinguishers having a gross weight not exceeding 40 lb. shall be installed so that the top of the fire extinguisher is not more than 5 ft. above the floor. Extinguishers having a gross weight greater than 40 lb. shall be so installed that the top of the fire extinguisher is not more than 3 1/2 ft. above the floor. In no case shall the clearance between the bottom of the extinguisher and the floor be less than 4 in.

5. Is the fire extinguisher classification 2A 10BC or greater? (Size can be found on the extinguisher's label.)

The fire extinguisher must be a minimum size rating of 2A-10BC dry chemical-type fire extinguisher to ensure that it is the proper size to put out a fire, should you have one. Does the commercial kitchen have a K Type extinguisher? Have your employees been trained on the operation of fire extinguishers?

6. Have the fire extinguisher(s) been serviced within the last year? Checked monthly?

Fire extinguisher(s) in a commercial structure must be inspected by a fire extinguisher company annually to ensure that they are in working order. Keeping a monthly checklist (on the rear of all inspection tags) for extinguishers serves two purposes; it helps employees learn the location and type of extinguishers and it notifies managers when it is time for a yearly test.

7. Is there only one thumb turn or key lock on each exit door? (No slide bolts are allowed to be on exit doors.)

Only one locking device is allowed on exit doors, and it must require only one action to open. This ensures that in an emergency, the exit doors work and allow the people in the structure to exit without delay.

8. If the exit door has a key lock, do the required exit door(s) have a sign that reads, "This Door to Remain Unlocked during Business Hours"?

The signage needs to be affixed on all keyed exit doors to ensure that they remain unlocked at all times when the building is occupied.

9. Are exits identified with a lighted EXIT signs?

Exit signs direct occupants to the required exits and when required, should be illuminated at all times and have a battery backup to provide operation during a power outage. All bulbs in the light shall be working. Replace any burnt out bulbs.

10. Is the exit(s) clear of obstructions so during an emergency, people can exit quickly and safely?

A path, equal to the width of the exit door, must remain clear and unobstructed at all times to allow persons in the building unrestricted exit. Are the exits free from snow and ice and properly lit?

11. Do the electrical panels have a 30-inch clearance in front for easy access?

A 30-inch clear area needs to be maintained around electrical panels at all times so maintenance can be safely performed. The doors to the electrical panels should remain closed to minimize the chance of sparks being thrown on stored materials in the event of an electrical failure. Storage should not be in electrical panel rooms.

12. Are the electrical panels properly marked to show all circuit breakers that provide power to all emergency lights and exit signs?

Properly marked breakers will allow you to test your emergency lights and exit signs periodically to ensure they will function correctly in case of an emergency.

13. Are all stored materials stacked so they are at least two feet below the ceiling?

Storage should be kept in an orderly manner and with at least two feet of clearance to the ceiling for buildings that are not equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. In buildings with automatic sprinkler systems, eighteen inches of clearance is needed from the sprinkler heads. These clearances serve two important purposes: 1) They allow an area for smoke to collect in the event of a fire, giving persons in the building adequate time to exit, and 2) They provide a clear area so the spray pattern of the sprinkler heads is not blocked allowing the sprinkler system to function properly.

14. If you have emergency lighting, does it work?

Emergency lighting provides occupants the light needed to see the exits in an emergency. The lighting should be checked to ensure that they are working properly. They should be tested monthly and a log be maintained. Any obstructions that may obscure an exit or emergency lights are not allowed.

15. Are the areas outside and around the building free of weeds, debris and trash?

Keeping the area around the building clear of high grass, weeds, and trash or debris reduces the fire risk around the outside of your building and also provides easy visibility for police officers patrolling the area. Massachusetts law now prohibits mulch from being applied within 18 inches of combustible building material on commercial structures or residential of more than six units. Combustible storage outside is regulated by fire codes.

16.Are extension cords used only for temporary wiring?

Extension cords used for temporary wiring should be of good quality and listed for the application for which they are being used. This minimizes the risk of the extension cord overheating and potentially causing a fire. Extension cords cannot be used for permanent wiring. Extension cords shall have UL listing tag attached.

17.Do the electrical receptacles have no more than two items plugged into them?

Electrical outlets should have no more than one item per outlet plugged into them, which may include one multi plug outlet power strip with a circuit breaker for each 2 plugs in the outlet. Following this practice minimizes the chance of circuit overload.

18.Are the electrical appliances cords in good repair?

You can minimize the risk of electrical shock and fire by simply inspecting all appliance cords periodically for signs of fraying or damage, and replacing a cord if needed.

19.Are all electrical boxes, switches and outlets equipped with covers to protect the user from shock?

All electrical outlets must be equipped with a cover plate which protects the employees and customers in your building from the dangers of electrical shock and prevents sparks from exiting the outlet junction box in the event of an electrical failure.

20.Are all garbage containers at least 10 feet away from walls, roofs, windows or door openings?

Your trash cans and dumpsters must be kept a minimum of 10 feet away from exterior walls and roof overhangs. They should not be stored in the path of the exits. This minimizes the risk of your building catching on fire in the event of a fire in the dumpster. It also ensures that exits are not blocked. Dumpsters over six cubic yards require a permit from the fire department.

21.Are there any quantities of flammable or combustible liquid being stored on site?

Small quantities of flammable or combustible liquids must be stored in approved and rated safety containers that are designed for the type of liquid being stored. Safety containers provide protection from damage and leakage of the material as well as leakage of vapors. Flammable liquid storage requires a permit from the fire department. Please refer to the Bellingham Fire Department website for instructions for flammable/combustible permits. The inspector will review storage limits with the property owner.

22.If quantities of more than 5 gallons are being stored, are they in noncombustible cabinets or safety cans?

It is advised that you not store any flammable or combustible materials in your building but if you choose to do so, smaller quantities must be stored in approved and rated flammable liquid storage container(s) or cabinets approved and permitted by the fire department. If you store larger quantities, fire-rated construction requirements for your building are required. Retail sales of flammable/combustibles are excluded from this storage requirement.

23.If you have a sprinkler system in your building, has it been tested and serviced within the past 12 months?

Your sprinkler system must be checked annually by a licensed fire sprinkler company to ensure that the system is in working order. The report generated must be copied to the fire department. The sprinkler room must be labeled "SPRINKLER CONTROL ROOM" on all doors leading to the area. The Fire Department Connection must be labeled with a red sign with white letters "FDC" and also indicate the businesses and units it services ***this sprinkler report is to be supplied at time of inspection, if system is shared please coordinate with building owner***

24.If your building has a fire alarm system, has the system been tested and serviced within the past 12 months?

Your fire alarm must be checked annually by a licensed fire alarm company to ensure that the system is in working order. This report must be copied to the fire department. A floor plan of all the zones in the fire alarm system must be mounted next to the fire alarm panel and all remote panels in a way to prevent tampering. ***This fire alarm test report is to be supplied at time of inspection***

25.Is the area around the furnace, water heater or any other heat producing appliance clear of combustible materials?

Keeping a minimum 36-inch clear area around any heat-producing appliance minimizes the chance of it igniting combustible materials due to the radiant heat the appliance produces.

26.If your building has a cooking equipment exhaust hood, has the hood been cleaned within the past 4, 6 or 12 months as required?

Proper cleaning of the vent hood at least once a year minimizes the chance of fire that could result from excessive grease build up. A certified company must clean the hood on a regular basis. *** The last two cleaning reports are to be supplied at time of inspection***

27.If your cooking equipment exhaust hood has a fire suppression system, has it been serviced in the last six months?

Proper maintenance of the hood suppression system must be performed every six months by a company licensed to service the system. ***The last 2 reports are to be supplied at time of inspection***

28.Is there clear access to meters and exits?

During winter months make sure that all means of egress, electrical meters, and natural gas meters are clear of snow and debris. A buildup of snow or ice could cause a hazardous condition on meters and prevent people from safely exiting the building.

29.Are there any missing or damaged ceiling tiles in the building?

Missing, damaged and/or dislodged ceiling tiles negatively affect the integrity of the fire-safety system in the building. Replace any damaged or missing tiles and fix any dislodged tiles. Sheetrock is part of the fire protection system in a building and prevents the spread of fire. All holes in sheetrock shall be repaired. Draft stopping shall be intact.

30.Does the Fire Department have an up to date copy of all emergency contacts?

If the Fire Department does not have valid contact information, please fill out an Emergency Contact Form and either fax it to the Fire Department or provide it to the Inspector at time of inspection. Also if there are any changes throughout the year please notify the Fire Department during normal business hours so that contact information can be kept up to date. Complete form on last page.

31.Are Fire Lanes marked and maintained and proper signage posted?

Fire lanes are designated by the Fire Department to allow access to the buildings and sprinkler system connections. They must remain open and accessible for fire trucks and ambulances. Signage and or curb marking are required. Fire lanes must be a minimum of 18 feet wide and 14 feet high.

32.Is there a lock box on the building?

It is recommended that the building have a Fire Department Lock Box on the exterior of the building. This allows non- damaging access to the building by the fire department during off business hours to check for alarm conditions or sprinkler problems. At the time of inspection all keys will be tested to ensure they are working and up to date. If you need a lock box for your building, contact the Bellingham Fire Department during regular business hours.

33.Are chemicals stored properly?

Are any chemicals on site stored as to not create a hazard? Example: Are chemical storage rooms labeled with proper markings?

34. Are there any Barbeque Grills or propane tanks present?

Charcoal Grills or open flame devices should be used ten feet from combustible structures and not used on combustible surfaces such as wood decks. Propane cannot be stored or used above the level of the first floor on decks or balconies. Propane should never be stored inside.

35. Are Curtains, draperies, blinds and other window treatments or seasonal decorations fire resistant and approved for use in a public building?

Window treatments, decorations, upholstered furniture in most public buildings are subject to NFPA 701 flammability standard. A certification tag must be affixed to the items.

36. Is the Occupancy load of a room clearly posted?

Every room or space that is assembly occupancy shall have the occupant load of the room or space posted in a conspicuous place, near the main exit or exit access doorway from the room or space.

37. Are you considered an assembly occupancy by the Building Department? Do you have an Emergency Planning and Preparedness Plan?

The development of emergency plans, training and conducting of fire exit drills shall comply with the applicable requirements of the MA Fire Codes and Law.

(a) General: The employees or attendants of places of public assembly shall be trained and drilled in the duties they are to perform in case of fire, panic or other emergency.

(b) Egress plan: A plan showing the occupant load, seating diagram and location of exits and of aisles leading thereto shall be maintained from the Original Approved Plans submitted to the Building and Fire Departments at the time of construction.

38. Are there any other permits that may be required at your facility?

Some permits that may be required are:

Black powder	Dumpster- greater than 6 cubic yards
Flammable Combustibles	Propane- 42 pounds or more
Welding	

If you have any questions regarding the Fire Safety Checklist please contact Bellingham Fire Department Fire Prevention by phone 508-966-1112 or by email fireprevention@bellinghamma.org

Business Name	
Address	
Phone Number	

Business Owner Information

Name	
Address	
Phone Number	

Property Owner Information

Name	
Address	
Phone Number	

Emergency Contacts

Closest Contact(to facility)		
Home Address		
Phone Number		

Alternative Contact		
Home Address		
Phone Number		

Alternative Contact		
Home Address		
Phone Number		