Seattle Fire Department sfd CAM Client Assistance Memo 5971

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Testing of Fire Protection Systems

Updated April 2017

Code Requirements

Fire protection systems (such as fire alarms, automatic sprinkler systems and standpipes) are among the most important components in any building for preserving lives, protecting property, and providing safety to first responders.

To ensure these systems are functional, the Fire Code requires the "responsible party" to maintain their systems in good working condition and to test their systems annually. According to the Fire Code, the "responsible party" is the building owner, building management company, or lease-designated person.

Systems testing — also called confidence testing — is performed by private sector technicians holding Seattle Fire Department (SFD) certification. These tests are separate from the regular building inspections conducted by the Seattle Fire Department firefighters.

Beginning July 1, 2017, test reports must be submitted to SFD via the department's third party vendor, Brycer. The company performing the testing and maintenance will submit the reports on behalf of the building owner. Accurate and timely inspection reporting, combined with this new tracking capacity, will reduce false alarms and expedite the repairs of fire protection systems. It is the Seattle Fire Department's goal that this closer partnership and oversight of systems testing will improve life safety and protect property for all who live, visit, and conduct business in Seattle – the mission of the Seattle Fire Department.

Testing Frequency

The responsible party, generally the building owner, must ensure that valid testing of a building's fire protection systems takes place within proper intervals.

The last page of this CAM has a chart showing the test intervals for each type of system. In addition, there are secondary tests and certain maintenance processes that must be performed periodically. The intervals for secondary procedures are one, four, five, six, 10, 12, 20, and 50 years depending on the type of system or component, and are defined in national standards including NFPA 25 and NFPA 72. The testing company you hire should be able to provide more information about these tests.

Certified Technicians Must Do the Testing and Maintenance

Only certified technicians are allowed to install, maintain, test, and repair fire protection systems within the city of Seattle. The Certification Unit of the Seattle Fire Marshal's Office administers the certification tests and issues the certificates. For more information on certification, review Administrative Rule 9.01 or call (206) 386-1351.

Tagging, Labelling and Reporting Requirements

After a fire protection system is tested or repaired, the technician must update the service tag or label on the system to indicate its condition:

- Red labels/tags indicate that the system is impaired.
- Yellow labels/tags indicate that the system has deficiencies.
- White labels/tags indicate that the system operates as designed.

The design for labels and tags is prescribed in Administrative Rules 9.02 and 9.04.

The technician must also fill out a report showing:

- What tests and inspections were performed.
- Any deficiencies that were found.
- The technician's evaluation of the overall condition of the system (status).

The required reporting forms are available on the Seattle Fire Department's website: http://www.seattle.gov/fire/systemstesting

The Seattle Fire Code requires that the technician supply a copy of the report:

- To the responsible party on the premises—in paper or electronic copy. Reports must be maintained on the premises for a minimum of three years.
- To file at the testing company's office.
- To SFD via the department's third party vendor.

Table 1: Required Systems Tests and Frequency

System Type	Test Frequency
Fire Alarm	Annually (Optional: Quarterly for high-rise buildings)
Fire Pumps	Annually
Standpipe and/or Hose Cabinets	Five Years
Automatic Sprinklers	Annually
Emergency Generator	Annually
Smoke Control	Annually
Foam Systems	Annually and Five Years
Fire Escapes	Five Years
Alternative Automatic Fire Extinguishing System	Annually
Commercial Cooking Rangehood Extinguishing System	Servicing required every six months

What To Do If Your System Is Not Working

Properly

Repair

Any time a deficiency impairs a fire protection system, the responsible party is expected to have the damaged, failed, or defective part repaired or replaced in a timely manner.

Notify SFD

Some deficiencies (red tagged systems) are so significant that you must take additional steps. If a planned or emergency impairment is anticipated to take a system out of service for more than eight hours, the Seattle Fire Department must be notified. This notification allows the department to assess the risks and make any operational decisions necessary to ensure response-readiness and the safety of building occupants and fire fighters.

For timelines and information on how to notify the Seattle Fire Department of impairments anticipated to last more than eight hours, refer to Administrative Rule 9.02, call the Fire Marshal's Office at (206) 386-1450, or visit our website: http://www.seattle.gov/fire/systemstesting.

Notify Other Parties

The insurance carrier, the alarm company, the building owner/ manager, and/or any supervisors or tenants in the areas to be affected should also be notified of the impairment and provided with an estimate of how long the system(s) might be out-of-service. These same parties should be notified when the system is returned to service.

Selecting a Contractor for Testing and Repairs

The responsible party is ultimately responsible for ensuring a Seattle Fire Department certified technician does the testing and makes any subsequent repairs. The Seattle Fire Department cannot make a specific recommendation about what testing company to use, but does provide a list of companies that employ certified technicians within the city: http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Fire/Business/SeattleFireDepartmentCompanieswithCertifiedTechnicians.pdf. To check that a specific technician has current certifications for your type of fire protection system, call (206) 386-1351.

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The Seattle Fire Department also recommends taking basic consumer precautions when hiring a contractor for system testing and repairs. Obtain multiple bids and request references for the required work. Contact the Better Business Bureau regarding the companies you are considering.

Compliance

The responsible party may receive a notice of violation (NOV) from the Seattle Fire Department requiring repair to the system(s) to correct deficiencies specified on the inspection report if those deficiencies have not been corrected. The NOV will establish a date for compliance. If the fire department contacts you again after the NOV has been issued, and you have not made the corrections, your file will be turned over to a Fire Department Compliance Officer in the Fire Marshal's Office. Each visit by a compliance officer will cost $298 in 2017 and the City may start legal action.

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