

Seattle Permits

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

High-Rise Building Inspection Program

June 2017

High-rise buildings present a unique risk to public safety because they often contain large concentrations of people above the reach of aerial ladders. The City of Seattle classifies a high rise as any building that has occupied floors 75 feet or higher above Fire Department access.

Beginning July 2017, the Seattle Fire Department (SFD) is implementing a new high-rise inspection program to promote fire and life safety. A small team of inspectors from the Fire Prevention Division will be dedicated to providing high quality, consistent inspections in high-rise buildings throughout Seattle. The program will:

- Help us better meet our mission of protecting occupant life and preserving property.
- Create a better partnership between SFD and building managers and engineers.
- Relieve the inspection burden on SFD's responding engine companies, particularly in downtown Seattle. These companies experience some of the highest run volumes in the City, and relieving them of their heavy high-rise inspection responsibilities will help improve emergency availability and response times.

Inspection Scheduling

To provide consistent and predictable inspections, your building will be set up with an inspection month. Inspections will be scheduled in advance and conducted annually, with a goal of having inspections recur in the same month each year. The SFD high-rise administrative specialist will call building management four weeks prior to schedule a date for the inspection.

He or she will verify and update current building contact information and will also be asking for a day-of-inspection contact, someone who will meet and accompany our inspector during the inspection. One week prior to the scheduled inspection, the inspector will call the day-of contact to confirm the inspection date and set the time.

High-Rise Inspection Checklist

An Inspection Checklist will be sent to the building representative after an inspection date is scheduled. The checklist is provided as a guide for building owners and managers to help them understand what areas and items the inspector will be inspecting. We recommend that building representatives follow the checklist and perform their own inspection in advance as the inspector will be inspecting the same items. This will help ensure an easy and successful inspection with SFD inspectors on site. Your copy of the checklist is not required to be filled out or submitted to the SFD. SFD's high-rise inspectors will be using their copy of the checklist during the inspection.

The Inspection Checklist is available on our website at <http://www.seattle.gov/fire/FMO/highrise/SFDHighRiseInspectionChecklist.pdf>.

Post-Inspection Summary

A post-inspection summary will be provided to building management following the inspection. The summary will include the inspection results and any recommendations and/or required corrections that the inspector noted during the inspection. The summary will also include information regarding any Notice of Violations (NOV) written to tenants in the building.

Compliance

During an inspection, the SFD inspector will discuss items that may require corrective actions with the building representative. The responsible party may receive an NOV from SFD. The NOV will list the items



that must be corrected and the date by which the corrections are required. If corrections are not made after one re-inspection, your file may either be turned over to a Fire Department Compliance Officer in the Fire Marshal's Office or the City Attorney's Office civil enforcement division. Each visit by a compliance officer will cost \$298 in 2017. The City Attorney's Office may start legal action.

Frequently Asked Questions

Must I be present when the inspector comes?

A building engineer or representative familiar with the building and systems layout, and capable of providing access to the fire control room and inspection areas, is required to meet and accompany our inspector during inspection of the core building. A representative is encouraged but not required to accompany the SFD inspector during inspection of tenant occupancies, such as restaurants in a food court within the high-rise building.

Will you be inspecting tenant spaces?

Yes, will be inspecting many but not all non-residential tenant spaces, and residential tenant spaces if requested by the tenant. One month prior to the inspection, when we call to schedule an inspection date, we will require that you send a list of non-residential tenants to our office. Our inspectors will review the list as they prepare for the inspection.

The inspector will enter and inspect tenant spaces that meet certain criteria:

1. Businesses and spaces with separate fire protection systems.
2. Businesses and spaces that have Fire Department permits to store hazardous materials and/or perform hazardous activities.
3. Other spaces at the discretion of the SFD inspector.
4. Private residences will not be inspected except by request of the resident.

Please communicate with your tenants prior to inspection and inform them of the date and timeframe scheduled for your building inspection. Please inform our inspectors of any special security concerns, such as high security rooms, at the time of scheduling so we may discuss with you.

What do I do if I have questions regarding the inspection checklist?

Please contact the Fire Marshal's Office High-Rise Unit at

(206) 386-1340 or SFD_FMO_HighRise@seattle.gov. The Captain in charge of the high-rise program and the administrative specialist are available during the day to answer specific questions related to the inspection checklist. The high-rise inspectors will also be available in between appointments to answer your questions.

What do I do if I do not understand the required corrections?

You may contact your assigned inspector directly or the high-rise administrative specialist at (206) 386-1340.

What are the fees for a high-rise inspection?

SFD's high-rise inspection service is charged at a rate of \$217 per hour, with a one hour minimum and thereafter in quarter-hour increments. The length of time to inspect a building and tenant spaces will vary with the size and complexity of the building as well as how prepared the building is for the inspection. Re-inspections are charged at the same rate for re-inspecting required correction items.

How do I pay for my high-rise inspection fees?

At the time of scheduling,, you will be asked to provide the name and contact information for the financially responsible party. That person will be invoiced by SFD Finance after the inspection is completed. At the time of the inspection, the inspector will leave a copy of the billing initiation agreement with you for your records. The billing initiation agreement is not an invoice. Do not pay the inspector.

Additional Information for High-Rise Tenants, Residents, Managers and Fire Safety Directors

SFD has prepared a variety of helpful information tailored specifically for tenants and residents of high-rise buildings, and managers and fire safety directors in high-rise buildings. Please visit <http://www.seattle.gov/fire/pubed/highrise/highrise.htm>. In addition, SFD maintains a number of additional client assistance memoranda (CAMs) that are intended for high-rise building owners and managers. These CAMS include:

- #5051 - Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans
- #5963 - High Rise Building Emergency Evacuation Drills
- #5982 - High Rise Fire Emergency Planning Requirements

CAMs are available on the department website at <http://www.seattle.gov/fire/FMO/firecode/cam/default.htm>.