

Seattle Permits

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

Confidence Testing of Fire & Life Safety Systems

Updated March 2012

Code Requirements

The Seattle Fire Code requires that all fire and life safety systems (such as fire alarms, automatic sprinkler systems and standpipes) be tested at regular intervals. This is called Confidence Testing, and is separate from the regular building inspections conducted by the Fire Department.

Confidence testing helps ensure that fire and life safety systems function as designed and reveals defects, if any, that require attention. The Seattle Fire Code, Section 901.6, requires that each owner, property manager, or person designated in a lease maintain all fire and life safety systems, on the premises, in full working condition at all times.

General Information

The responsible party must ensure that valid testing of a building's systems takes place within proper intervals. Any time a deficiency is found the responsible party is required to immediately have the damaged, failed, or defective part repaired or replaced.

The last page of this bulletin 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 as part of the main test. The intervals for secondary procedures are one, four, five, six, ten, 12, 20, and 50 years depending on the type of system or component.

Only certified technicians are allowed to install, maintain, test, and repair fire and life safety systems within the City of Seattle. The Certification Unit of the Fire Marshal's Office administers the certification tests and issues the certificates. For more information on certification, review Administrative Rule 9.01.09 or call (206) 386-1351.

After a 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 out of service.
- 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 Rule 9.02.09.

The technician must also fill out a report showing:

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

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

- To the responsible party on the premises. Reports should be maintained on the premises for a minimum of three years.
- To file at the testing company's office.
- To the Seattle Fire Department Fire Marshal's office.

All fire protection companies (not the owner) are required, by law, to send every report of confidence testing and repairs to the Confidence Testing Unit in the Seattle Fire Marshal's Office.

www.seattle.gov/fire



For information on submitting forms to the Fire Marshal’s Office, refer to Administrative Rule 9.02.09 or call (206) 386-1448.

Selecting a Contractor for Testing and Repairs

The system owner, building management company, or lease-designated person 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 can provide a list of certified technicians within the city. To check on technician certifications call (206) 386-1351.

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

Compliance

If the deficiencies specified on the inspection report are not corrected within 30 days, you will receive a Notice of Violation (NOV) from the Fire Department requiring you to make the repairs. The notice will give you a date for compliance. If the Fire Department contacts you twice after the NOV has been issued, and you have not made the corrections, your file will be turned over to a Department Compliance Officer. Each visit by a Compliance Officer will cost \$183.00 and the city may start legal action. If you have questions about any of the items listed on a test report, call the SFD Confidence Testing Officer at (206) 386-1448 for clarification.

**Fire and Life Safety Systems
Confidence Testing Schedule**

SYSTEM TYPE	TEST FREQUENCY
Fire Alarm	Annually Quarterly for high-rise buildings
Stairway Door Locks	Annually
Fire Pumps	Annually
Standpipe and/or Hose Cabinets	Five years
Automatic Sprinklers	Annually
Shaft Pressurization	Annually
Emergency Generator	Annually
Tempered Windows/Smoke Removal	Annually
Sequence Tests (at required)	Annually
Foam Systems	Annually & five years
Fire Escapes	Five years
Halon, CO2, Inergen	Annually
Rangehood	6 months