

SEATTLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Information Bulletin #973



Fire Escape Confidence Testing

Fire escapes may be used during emergencies by both building occupants and fire fighters. Many fire escapes were built in the early 1900's. To assure the safety of their use from year to year the Seattle Fire Code requires them to be checked every five years.

1. A confidence test must be conducted on fire escapes and must be performed by, or conducted under the direct supervision of, a currently licensed Washington State Structural Engineer. The confidence test report must be stamped, dated and signed with the Professional Engineer's stamp and submitted to the Seattle Fire Department's Confidence Testing Unit.

There are professional testing agencies listed in the phone book. Check the yellow page listings under *fire escapes* and *fire protection*.

To search for a licensed structural engineer in Washington State by name or county, go to the Washington State Department of Licensing web site at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/bpdLicenseQuery/>.
2. The entire fire escape must be checked for rust, and painted if needed. Hand rails must be physically checked for integrity. Loose bolts, grates, and framework should be tightened, repaired, or replaced as necessary. The ladder must be checked for unauthorized modification and proper function. Building Codes under which fire escapes were installed normally require that the ladder extend from a point not more than nine feet above the ground to at least two feet above the roof or parapet.
3. If the structural engineer's inspection determines that repair or upgrading is required, the work must be performed with a Department of Planning and Development permit. For information on the Department of Planning and Development requirements, call 684-8850.
4. Confidence testing and reporting requirements are included in Seattle Fire Code Administrative Rule 09.02.09. The owner is responsible for maintaining their systems in accordance with The Seattle Fire Code and national standards.
5. Fire Escapes must display a service tag made of plastic, 9" x 17" which must be attached to the fire escape on the exterior of the lowest landing. This allows the tag to be easily read by anyone who may use the fire escape for maintenance and/or emergency evacuation.
6. Any removal of fire escapes must be done under permit from Department of Development and Planning (DPD). The building owner is required to provide the Seattle Fire Department with a copy of the DPD permit to remove a fire escape.