

Seattle Permits

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

High-Rise Building Inspection Program

Updated January 2023

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.

The Seattle Fire Department (SFD) has a small team of inspectors from the Fire Prevention Division dedicated to providing high quality, consistent inspections in high-rise buildings throughout Seattle. The program's goals are to:

- 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 helps improve emergency availability and response times.

Inspection Scheduling

Due to the complexities of high-rise building fire protection systems and management, SFD requires a responsible party to be present to join our inspectors during the inspection. SFD offers the opportunity to request a specific inspection date and time, so you can plan to have staff available for the inspection. We also intend for your building's inspection to occur in the same month each year, so that you understand the inspection schedule and can be prepared. **If you wish to request a specific inspection date/time, please**

contact our office at SFD_FMO_HighRise@seattle.gov or (206) 615-1305. Otherwise we will inspect your building each year on a schedule determined by the SFD inspection sequence.

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 SFD 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/business-services/high-rise-inspection-program>

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 Notices of Violation (NOVs) 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 Prevention Division or the City Attorney's Office civil enforcement division. Each visit by a compliance officer will cost \$373 as of 2021. 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, SFD will be inspecting many but not all non-residential tenant spaces, and residential tenant spaces if requested by the tenant.

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 Prevention Division High-Rise Unit at (206) 615-1305 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) 615-1305.

What are the fees for a high-rise inspection?

As of January 1, 2023, SFD's high-rise inspection service fee is \$234 plus a time charge of \$234 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 conducted by the high-rise inspectors 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 the City 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 information tailored specifically for tenants/residents and managers/fire safety directors in high-rise buildings. Please visit <http://www.seattle.gov/fire/safety-and-community/workplace-fire-safety>. 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/business-services/fire-code-and-fire-safety-documents#clientassistancememos>.