



NORTH COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

Residential Inspection Program

Frequently Asked Questions

HOW WILL THIS PROGRAM BENEFIT ME?

Fire and life safety inspections are done to help protect owners and residents from the devastating effects of fire. By promoting a safe living environment in these occupancies, the chance for fire decreases. Fire can kill, disable, destroy property and disrupt lives. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), seventy-nine percent of all the 480,600 building fires reported in 2012 occurred in residential properties; including homes, hotels, motels, apartment buildings, rooming houses, and dormitories. Eighty-three percent (2,380) of all fire deaths occurred in the home. There were 13,126 civilian injuries and more than 7 billion dollars of loss.

ARE THESE INSPECTIONS REQUIRED?

Yes. These inspections must be conducted annually for all properties containing three or more dwelling units, such as apartments, condominiums, hotels, motels, lodging houses, bed and breakfast facilities, and congregate residences. The California Health and Safety Code, Section 13146.2 (a) mandates that the inspections be completed annually, (b) provides the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) to charge property owners to recover reasonable costs for providing these annual inspections.

WHEN WILL THESE INSPECTIONS OCCUR?

They will be conducted by Fire Prevention Specialists Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm. Large occupancies may be contacted to arrange inspection dates and times in an effort to ensure access to fire system components and facility personnel responsible for their maintenance. Contacting the owner of smaller properties is not always possible due to the sheer amount of properties needing to be inspected during the year.

WHAT WILL THE INSPECTORS LOOK FOR?

A typical fire and life safety inspection for these occupancies includes, checking for fire hazards specific to access, blocked exits, exit lights, fire protection equipment, fire extinguishers, storage, housekeeping, and utilities (gas and electric). A "Safety Pre-Inspection" check sheet is available to assist you.

WILL THE INSPECTORS ENTER INDIVIDUAL UNITS?

Generally, inspectors will not examine the interior of units. However, if an occupant is home, he/she may request the inspector to check their smoke detector. Inspectors may check smoke detectors in occupied or vacant units if the owner or manager is present and gives consent.



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HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR MY INSPECTION?

Your property should be maintained in good order. For example, common areas and exit hallways should be clear of stored items; laundry rooms kept clean; address and unit numbers clearly visible; exit signs well-maintained; hydrants, fire sprinkler systems and utility valves kept clear of vegetation. Fire extinguishers must be service and tagged annually by a certified contractor. Fire sprinkler systems and fire alarm systems must be serviced annually. Smoke detectors and batteries should be checked twice a year. A “Safety Pre-Inspection” check sheet is available at the North County Fire Protection District’s Fire Prevention Bureau located at 300 S. Main Ave., Fallbrook, CA 92028.

WHAT IS THE COST OF THE INSPECTION?

The cost of the inspection varies and is based on the number of buildings and units. Fees will only be assessed after an inspection has occurred. After the conclusion of the inspection, a report detailing any violations that need correction will be left with, emailed, or mailed to the property owner. If a re-inspection is necessary, it will be conducted on or after 30 days from the initial inspection. Violations will be cleared on the first re-inspection, when corrective action has been taken. If a 2nd and 3rd re-inspection is required, additional inspection fees may be charged.

DO OTHER BUSINESSES PAY INSPECTION FEES?

Yes, several types of businesses pay Fire Department Permit Fees, which cover the cost of inspections, such as restaurants, nightclubs, and new businesses when installing fire protection equipment.

WHY NOT CHARGE FINES INSTEAD OF FEES?

The Fire Protection District’s goal is to achieve compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. The purpose is not to penalize property owners, but to educate and gain compliance. The Fire Protection District’s goal is to have citizens living in safe multi-unit dwelling properties. Funding the program through fines would create an unpredictable revenue source, which will not produce full cost recovery for staffing of inspectors.