

Fire and Life Safety Inspections in Local Businesses

The Burney Fire Protection District has adopted a program to improve our annual Fire and Life Safety Inspections at all commercial properties within the Fire District. The Board of Commissioners voted to adopt the 2007 California Fire Code in its entirety as of March 20, 2010. These inspections are designed to ensure that businesses and commercial occupancies are compliant with this Code. The Fire District considers Fire and Life Safety Inspections at these types of occupancies to be a benefit to the owners/operators, their tenants and guests, and are an important part of fire prevention. They not only protect life and property, but may also protect economic interests. By preventing or reducing losses, the community can help contain the cost of insurance and may help businesses avoid financial disasters stemming from fires.

Here are a few tips to help your business pass inspection:

- **Secure all pressurized cylinders** (full or empty) to prevent falling. Never store gas grills with attached fuel tanks inside a building.
- **Have all fire extinguishers inspected and tagged annually** by a qualified person. Fire extinguishers need regular maintenance to work properly. Also, seek service when an extinguisher is discharged or shows signs of physical damage.
- **Be sure that the building address is visible from the street.** Address numbers or other approved identification must be visible from the street fronting the property and plainly legible. Use a minimum of 4 inch high numbers on a contrasting background.
- **Have your fire protection systems tested.** The California Fire Code requires periodic testing of fire sprinklers, and kitchen hood systems. Testing frequencies vary depending on the type of system, and may be annual, quarterly or monthly.

- **Properly seal all openings in rated enclosures made for pipes, wiring and ducts.** A rated enclosure is a type of construction designed to contain a fire for at least one hour. Any size hole in any part of the wall or ceiling is an invitation for fire to spread faster than designed.
- **Ensure that exit doors can be easily opened in one motion.** Key locking hardware and thumb bolts are not allowed in most types of commercial occupancies. Talk to your fire inspector about options.
- **Make sure exit doors are working properly, clearly marked, and unobstructed.** Doors leading to stairways and hallways should remain closed at all times to isolate smoke and heat away from escape routes. Never place storage in required exit ways.
- **Provide enough ceiling clearance for all storage.** High-stacked storage can block exit signs and interfere with fire sprinkler systems. For sprinkled buildings, a clear space of 18 inches below the level of the sprinkler heads is required. Non-sprinkled buildings must have a 24-inch clearance to the ceiling.
- **Never use extension cords for permanently mounted devices.** Typically washers, dryers, refrigerators, built-in dishwashers, microwaves, and wall ventilation fans are considered to be permanent. Never use an extension cord with air conditioners or space heaters. Extension cords may be approved for temporary uses only.

While there are many other items we may inspect for, these are just a few tips and some of the common issues we have been seeing in our inspections throughout the community.

Are these inspections required?

Yes. These inspections must be conducted annually for all commercial properties and properties containing three or more dwelling units including hotels, motels, lodging houses, bed and breakfast facilities, and congregate residences. The California Health and Safety Code, Section 13146.2 (a) mandates that these

inspections be completed annually by the Authority having jurisdiction, while the California Health and Safety Code, Section 13146.2 (b) provides the Fire District legal authority to perform these inspections and cite for violations.

When will these inspections happen?

Inspections are scheduled year round except for the month of December. Inspections will be conducted by staff of the Burney Fire Protection District, Monday through Friday during the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. Each property is inspected at approximately the same time of year. 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.

The inspection process.

An initial inspection will be conducted by a member of the Fire District. At the conclusion of the inspection a report detailing any violations that need correction will be mailed or given to the property owner. The property owner or their representative shall promptly correct violations. A re-inspection will be conducted between 15-45 days of the initial inspection depending on the violation. At this time, individual violations will be cleared if corrective action has been taken. If violations still exist, a 2nd Notice of Violation will be issued and a 3rd inspection scheduled. If violations still remain uncorrected, a citation may be issued and inspection fees assessed.

I hope you found this information educational, and as always should you have any questions please feel free to call the Fire District at 530-335-2212.