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Fire Inspection FAQ's

1. What version of the International Fire Code has the City of Humble adopted?

ICC- 2018 International Fire Code

2. How much do the permits cost?

The permit fees are located on the Permit Fee Schedule Form. All fees changed as of June 13, 2019

3. What amendments have been made to the current Fire Code?

The current amendments can be found on the City of Humble website under Ordinances.

- The sprinkler system square footage has been lowered to 10,000 sqft. for all occupancies.
- Residential occupancies of three (3) or more attached units must install a Fire Sprinkler system.
- 50% or greater renovation, the building must be brought up to code prior to issuance of a Certificate of occupancy.

4. How do I turn in my plans for review?

Two sets of plan shall be turned in at the City of Humble Building Department, 114 Higgins St., Humble, Texas, 77338. All contractor/owners must fill out and supply documentation list on the specific permit application. Applications and Plans that do not meet the requirements will be rejected.

5. How do I set up a Fire Protection System Inspection or a Building Final Fire Inspection?

Once stamped plans have been returned to the contractor, the Humble Fire Marshal's Office may be contacted at 281-446-4928 to set all Inspections. All fire protection systems shall be pre-tested before an inspection is scheduled

6. Can a "day-of" Fire Protection System Inspection or Building Final Fire Inspection be scheduled?

Normally, a minimum of 24 hours is required to schedule an appointment to witness a system test, Inspection or Building Final. If a Fire Inspector is available, the time frame may be shorter. Please call 281-446-4928 to schedule an appointment.

7. Can work on my construction project before the plan review process is complete?

No, the plan review process must be complete and a set of accepted and stamped plans must be on site before work may begin. A penalty will be issued if work started before completed permitting.

8. Can a building be occupied and/or stocked with merchandise in a building before the fire protection system are tested and approved?

No employees or stocking of merchandise will be allowed prior to any CO or TCO. A Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) may be issued on the agreement of both the Fire Marshal and the Building Official, only after all fire protection systems and life safety systems have been tested and approved.

9. When is a Knox Box (key box) entry required on a property for emergency access?

Where access to or within a structure or an area is restricted because of secured openings or where immediate access is necessary for life-saving or fire-fighting purposes, the fire code official is authorized to require a key box to be installed in an approved location. A Knox Box shall be placed on all occupancies with a Fire Alarm System and Fire Sprinkler System that initiates an Automatic Fire Department response and all Controlled Access Gates.

A Knox Box may be ordered directly from the Knox Corporations at knoxbox.com.

10. Fire Alarm System?

The requirements to install a fire alarm system are based on several factors that are found in current buildings (as well as buildings being built). These factors include the type of building classification, the number of people that can be in the building (based on maximum number of people), and size of the building.

A fire alarm system is considered a life safety system. It is designed to operate automatically when either a manual pull station is activated or when smoke is detected by a smoke detector. Upon activation, it will notify the building occupants by flashing lights and a loud sound to evacuate the building.

A fire alarm system is also one of the two most important fire protection systems that can be installed in a building to protect the contents, inventories, stock, merchandise, tools and equipment, and the lives of those people who work in the building and those who visit the building.

11. Fire Sprinkler System?

The requirements to install a fire sprinkler system are based on several factors that are found in current buildings (as well as buildings being built). These factors include the type of building classification, size of the building, and the contents of the building.

A fire sprinkler system is considered a life safety system. It is designed to operate automatically when a certain amount of heat at the ceiling level activates a sprinkler head and causes water to flow. This water flow will either completely extinguish a fire or hold the fire from progressing further until the fire

department can arrive. National Fire Protection Association statistics indicate that in almost all cases, only one or two sprinkler heads activate when a fire actually occurs.

A fire sprinkler system is also one of the two most important fire protection systems that can be installed in a building to protect the contents, inventories, stock, merchandise, tools and equipment, and the lives of those people who work or reside in the building and those who visit the building. Contrary to the popular TV version of fire sprinklers, the activation of one sprinkler head does not cause all heads to go off and flood a building.

12. How is the occupant load for my building calculated?

The occupant load for a building is based on the number of people that can be in a specific area of a building. It uses the actual square foot of a room or area multiplied by a factor indicated in the Fire Code for that type of room use. The total occupant load for a building is calculated by adding all of the various room/area occupant loads together.

Certain types of rooms are exempt from calculation, such as a bathroom, because the bathroom would normally be occupied by someone from one of the other calculated rooms. The occupant load indicator listed in the Fire Code is different for different types of room uses; for example, an area used for an office does not need as much room as a room where manufacturing equipment is used. The seating area of a church with fixed pews is different from the seating area of a restaurant.

13. I just started a business and/or moved into a new building; what do I have to do?

You must obtain a new Certificate of Occupancy. In order to get this certificate, you must call the Fire Marshal's Office and schedule a Fire Inspection for Certificate of Occupancy.

An inspection is required because buildings are built based on the contents or operations to be performed inside the building. When the occupancy changes, the Fire Inspector has to check to make sure the fire protection related construction features of the building are consistent with the new occupancy and its contents and operations. You will be advised at the time if additional fire protection systems or fire resistive construction must be added based on your operations. If the building is found to meet the fire code for your occupancy requirements, the Certificate of Occupancy will be issued to you. If the building does not meet the specific Fire Code requirements, the Inspector will provide you with information on how to proceed from that point.

14. Is my building "Grandfathered" from having to meet current codes?

This is a misconception or myth. There are no provisions in either the Local Government Code or the International Fire or Building Codes that allows a building to exist in an unsafe condition.

IFC 2018- Sec 110.1.1- Unsafe conditions. Structures or existing equipment that are or hereafter become unsafe or deficient because of inadequate means of egress or which constitute a fire hazard, or are otherwise dangerous to human life or the public welfare, or which involve illegal or improper occupancy or inadequate maintenance, shall be deemed an unsafe condition. A vacant structure that is not secured against unauthorized entry as required by ICF 2018 Section 311 shall be deemed unsafe.

15. What authority does the City of Humble have to conduct Fire Inspections?

City of Humble Fire Marshal's Office conducts fire and life safety inspections based on a Fire Code requirement that all commercial, public accessible, and multi-family residential buildings be maintained in a safe condition. The City Ordinance that provides authority to conduct inspections is Chapter 18- Fire Prevention and Protection of the City Ordinances.

16. Why does the City conduct Fire Inspections?

There are two general reasons why fire and life safety inspections are conducted: (1) to ensure that any building in which the general public enters for business, entertainment, social, religious, or other purposes is maintained in a safe status. (2) Fire and life safety inspections provide the owner/occupant of the building an indication of fire and life safety hazards so they may correct the hazards to reduce their liability and potential for loss due to a fire or accident.

17. What is a Fire Code?

A Fire Code is a group of fire and life safety requirements that are developed to protect a specific type of operation, to protect the occupants of a building from fire, and to reduce the potential for a fire to start. These requirements are developed based on information gathered from around the country that has caused fires in the past. A significant amount of investigation and research is conducted to determine the actual cause of fire before an item becomes a part of the Fire Code. Once a Fire Code has been adopted by a City, it becomes the City Law that regulates fire and life safety. Failure to comply with the Fire Code can result in citations and fines.

18. How often does the City of Humble conduct a fire/safety inspection?

Every effort is made to inspect all business in the City on an annual basis. While we try to inspect each year on approximately the same date, this is not always possible. Our policy is to inspect approximately one year from the last inspection, within the same month.

19. A Fire Inspector found a violation of the Fire Code in my building; what must I do?

If a violation is found, the Fire Inspector will provide a date (generally 30 days) to correct the violation. If the violation can be corrected during the inspection, it will be noted on the inspection form that the correction has already taken place.

20. The Fire Inspector told me that a re-inspection is necessary, why?

A re-inspection becomes necessary when a violation is found that cannot be corrected at the time of the inspection. The reason for the re-inspection is to produce the documentation showing the violation has been corrected, and that the building is then in compliance with all applicable codes and laws.

21. If I fail to make corrections to a fire code violation, what happens?

Initially, the Fire Inspector will issue a Notice of Violation. The Notice will indicate a date that the violation must be corrected by. The Fire Marshal's Office will make every effort to work with the building owner/occupant to bring the building into compliance without having to take further legal action. However, if the building owner/occupant continues to resist efforts to correct a fire code violation, the owner/occupant is subject to citation or arrest and prosecution as indicated in the City Ordinance 1-11, General Penalty.

22. How do I get my fire extinguishers inspected?

You must contact a fire extinguisher company, have them come to your business and inspect the extinguishers. Extinguishers have a life span of 25 years and must meet a criteria during their yearly inspections.

23. Can I use a Space Heater in my Business?

The use of space heater are strongly advised against, but are not illegal. The use of a space heater will follow the International Fire Code- Clearance from ignition sources. Clearance between ignition sources, such as luminaires, heaters, flame-producing devices, and combustibile materials shall be maintained in an approved manner. The clearance between combustibile materials and unit heaters, radiant heaters, duct furnaces, flues and other heat producing devices shall be in accordance with the clearances shown on the product listing, but in no case shall be less than 3 feet (914.4 mm) in all directions, except as provided for in the Building Code. (Fire Code, Section 305.1)

24. Fire Lanes?

The Fire Lanes and access roads shall follow Appendix D in the International Fire Code 2018 and City Ordinance 18-77.

25. Fire Extinguisher?

Fire extinguisher must be place every 75 feet of travel and inspected every 12 months. Fire extinguishers shall be placed no higher than 5 feet and no lower than 4inches on the mounting surface. Fire extinguishers must be visible at all times.