



DC Fire & EMS Department Fire Prevention Division Inspection Priorities



The Fire Prevention Division is comprised of two separate branches that have inspection responsibilities: the Code Enforcement Branch and the Plans and Permits Branch. The Code Enforcement Branch operates primarily on an inspection model of fire inspections. The inspections are based upon geographical location as well as type of occupancy. There are twenty five inspectors assigned to perform these inspections.

The Plans and Permit Branch operates primarily on the permit model of fire inspections. This model utilizes the permits required by the IFC Fire Code to determine inspection priorities. This focuses upon inspecting target risks defined by the code, when issuing operation permits on an annual basis. There are nine inspectors assigned to the Plans and Permits Branch.

The inspection priorities below are defined in the order of importance for the DCFEMS Fire Prevention Division:

1. **Fire Code Complaint Inspections** (Customer Service)

This priority list for inspections will assist members of the division and managers in identifying the agency priorities. The ability for our agency to be responsive and provide the best possible customer service is reflected in our ability to respond promptly and professionally to all requests and complaints that are received.

2. **Company Based Residential Inspection Follow-up** (FD Form 22)

The prompt and professional handling of follow-up inspections from operational companies that have submitted a FD Form 22 reflects upon the division's image and level of competence. This is probably the one area where we can truly make a difference in terms of fire and life safety, as this is where we are experiencing many of our fire deaths. The importance of the multi-dwelling inspections cannot be over-emphasized.

3. **DCPS School Annual Fire Inspections** (Mandated)

The mandate of the DCPS School inspections was a condition set forth in the Parents United vs. Marion Barry, Civil Action #92-3478, which required the agency fire inspectors to complete semi-annual inspections of the DC Public School Systems. The focus of these inspections was not based entirely on fire and life safety, but required all code issues, as well as maintenance issues to be identified. This has since morphed into annual inspections of all DC public schools for fire and life safety code issues. The current agreement with DCPS is included in the Code Enforcement Section of this manual. The agreement is the VAMP Program, Violation Abatement Management Protocol. The division has expanded this program to include all DC Public Charter Schools, Colleges, and Universities. The annual inspections of our schools are a priority for the division.

4. Target Hazard Inspections (Permits)

Target hazard inspections are mandated in the International Fire Code as well as the DCMR, Chapter 12H Fire Code. The following hazardous conditions require an operational permit:

1.	Aerosol Products	24.	Hot Work Operations
2.	Amusement Buildings	25.	Industrial Ovens
3.	Aviation Facilities	26.	Lumber Yard and Woodworking Plants
4.	Carnivals and Fairs	27.	Liquid or gas-fueled vehicles or equipment in assembly buildings
5.	Battery Systems	28.	LP Gas
6.	Cellulose Nitrate Film	29.	Magnesium
7.	Combustible Dust Producing Ops	30.	Misc. Combustible Storage
8.	Combustible Fibers	31.	Open Burning
9.	Compressed Gasses	32.	Open Flames and Candles
10.	Covered Mall Buildings	33.	Organic3 Coatings
11.	Cryogenic Fluids	34.	Places of Assembly
12.	Cutting and Welding	35.	Private Fire Hydrants
13.	Dry Cleaning Plants	36.	Pyrotechnic Special Effects Material
14.	Exhibits and Trade Shows	37.	Pyroxylin Plastics
15.	Explosives	38.	Refrigeration Equipment
16.	Fire Hydrants and Valves	39.	Repair Garages and Service Stations
17.	Flammable and Combustible Liquids	40.	Rooftop Heliports
18.	Floor Finishing	41.	Spraying or Dipping
19.	Fruit and Crop Ripening	42.	Storage of Scrap Tires and Tire Byproducts
20.	Fumigation and Insecticidal Fogging	43.	Temporary Membrane Structures, Tents and Canopies
21.	Hazardous Materials	44.	Tire Re-Building Plants
22.	Hazardous Production Materials (HPM) Facilities	45.	Waste Handling
23.	High Piled Storage	46.	Wood Products

Operational permits are required as specified in the IFC 2006 Edition and the Title 12 DCMR 12H Fire Code Supplement (2008). The operational permit provides the Fire Marshal's Office the opportunity to inspect the hazardous use or storage and become aware of these target hazards within the community, while ensuring all operations are being conducted with fire and life safety concerns being addressed. Further detailed information regarding the operational permits can be found in the Plans and Permits section of this manual.

5. Public Assembly Inspections (Low Frequency – High Risk)

Assembly occupancies provide an opportunity for a high risk loss of life. Throughout history we have seen far too many people injured and killed by fires in assembly occupancies. Some examples are the Happy Land Social Club, Beverly Hills Supper Club, and most recently, the

Station Nightclub Fire in West Warwick, Rhode Island. Assembly occupancies include: theatres, nightclubs restaurants, bars, art galleries, bowling alleys, churches, exhibit halls, dance halls, auditoriums, libraries, and museums, pool halls, outdoor bleachers, grandstands, stadiums, and amusement parks. These inspections are necessary to keep the public safe at gatherings of large amounts of people. While the frequency of fires and fire deaths may be low in these occupancies, the risk is great in terms of loss of life, hence the low frequency/high risk hazard.

6. Institutional Occupancy Inspections

Institutional occupancies can be defined as those in which people having physical limitations because of health or age are harbored for medical treatment or other care or treatment, or in which people are detained for penal or correctional purposes or in which the liberty of occupants is restricted. Examples of this include, jails, child care facilities, day care facilities, half-way houses, group homes, rehab houses, alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities, prisons, adult care facilities and assisted living facilities. These occupancies are inspected within our Plans and Permits branch specifically as most of these facilities operate under an operational permit which requires an annual inspection. We are also guided by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DC Department of Health, the regulating body of many of these occupancies, to provide annual fire inspections. The MOU specifies the cost recovery for fire inspections.

7. Mercantile and Business Inspections

Mercantile and business occupancy inspections are conducted by Code Enforcement Branch personnel who are assigned to each of the city's eight wards. These inspections are often driven by the basic business licensing and certificate of occupancy requirements set forth by the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Annual fire inspections are required for business license renewal. This is not an automated system and relies upon the business owner to make application for an inspection. Quite often this may not happen, and the business goes without inspection.

8. Home Fire Safety Inspections (Operations companies upon request)

The responsibility for home fire safety inspections is designated to the Operations Division in the DCFEMS Order Book. While these inspections are important in an overall plan for risk reduction and life safety, the ultimate decision to permit the inspection of a private home rests with the owner. These inspections are handled as requested by the home owner. The actual numbers of these are small in proportion to other inspections performed by the agency.

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