



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

6751 Columbia Gateway Drive, Suite 400, Columbia, Maryland 21046
410-313-6000

JOHN S. BUTLER, FIRE CHIEF • ALLAN H. KITTLEMAN, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Office of the Fire Marshal Pre-Inspection of Business Occupancies

In a short period of time a fire safety inspection will be conducted by the Office of the Fire Marshal at your place of business. This fire safety inspection will assist you with providing a safe atmosphere for you, your patrons and your employees as well as the protection of your business. Our goal is to educate you and your employees in maintaining a fire safe environment which is one step in leading to a fire safe Howard County.

In order to streamline the process, there are several items that can be corrected prior to the inspection. We have prepared this list for your review prior to the inspection and for future self-inspections.

Exits - All exits shall be kept clear of all debris and storage. All means of exit shall be of the appropriate type for the occupancy. Doors shall operate to the fully opened position, securely latch when closed and be maintained in proper working order. Panic hardware, and door closures shall be maintained and in working order where required. Doors equipped with panic hardware shall not have any additional locks or latches.

Exit Signs - All Exit signs shall be illuminated and visible.

Fire Extinguishers - All fire extinguishers shall be serviced annually by a licensed extinguisher company. Fire extinguishers shall be unobstructed, full, tagged, dated, and the key shall be in place and protected with a plastic seal. The extinguishers shall be mounted, with the top of the extinguisher between 3 and 5 feet in height and the bottom not closer than 4 inches to the floor. Any questions on the type of the extinguisher may be directed to the Office of the Fire Marshal.

Fire Alarm Systems - Fire alarm pull stations and alarm signaling devices shall be accessible, unobstructed, and visible. Fire Alarm systems are required to be fully operational at all times and have a full system inspection annually by a licensed fire alarm technician. The service report shall be reviewed and all deficiencies shall be corrected. The service report shall be kept on the premises.

Sprinkler Systems - All storage shall be a minimum of 18 inches below the sprinkler heads. Sprinkler heads shall not be obstructed or have articles hanging from them. Sprinkler control valve rooms shall be marked. A 3 feet clearance shall be kept around the valves. Sprinkler systems are required to be fully operational at all times and have a full system inspection annually by a licensed sprinkler technician. The service report shall be reviewed and all deficiencies shall be corrected. The service report shall be kept on the premises.

Fire Department Connections (FDC) – Sprinkler fire department connections consist of all hose connections and control valves used for operating, servicing, testing or supplying water to the sprinkler system. FDCs and its respective signage, if required, shall be visible to responding fire department units. A 15 foot clearance (7.5 feet in all directions) shall be maintained around all FDCs. Any obstruction or condition that deters or hinders access is prohibited.



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Emergency Lighting - Emergency lighting shall automatically provide illumination in case of failure of normal lighting. A functional test of the emergency lighting shall be performed at 30 day intervals for not less than 30 seconds and annually for 1 ½ hours. Written records of all tests shall be kept.

Storage - All storage shall be 18 inches below the ceiling as well as any sprinkler heads. NO storage shall be placed, or kept in any portion of an exit or an exit stairway. A 36 inch clearance of combustibles shall be maintained around all heat producing devices.

Electrical panels - All storage shall be kept 36 inches away from all electrical panels. All doors or panels will be latched closed. Blanks shall be placed in open panels. All tape or other devices used to keep breakers from functioning shall be removed. Electric rooms shall be marked.

Extension cords - Extension cords shall not be utilized as permanent wiring. Extension cords must be sized to the device in use. A breaker protected, strip outlet and/or permanent wiring shall be utilized when multiple or additional outlets are needed. Multiple strips or extension cords shall not be chained together to form a longer service. All cords and equipment shall be listed by a testing laboratory recognized by the State of Maryland.

Corridors/Aisles – Corridors and aisles shall be unobstructed at all times. Corridors shall be a minimum of 44 inches where serving an occupant load of 50 or more people. Aisles shall be a minimum 36 inches.

Housekeeping - The occupancy shall be checked for debris inside and outside. Trash receptacles shall not be allowed to overflow. Where applicable, dumpsters shall be emptied on a timely basis and when required. Accumulations of combustibles are discouraged. Exterior combustible or flammable material, including dumpsters, shall not be located within 15 feet of the building, structure, or property line.

Fire/Smoke Assemblies - All walls, ceilings, and floor assemblies shall be maintained. Wall openings and pipe chases shall be sealed to the classification of the wall. All ceiling tiles shall be in place.

Displays - Displays, racks, tables, chairs, decorations, etc., shall not obstruct exits, exit signs or fire protection equipment (2 through 7 above).

Street Address Numbers - Street address numbers should be viewable from the street. The numbers shall be at least 6 inches high on a contrasting background.

Per County Code, HCDFRS charges for fire inspections, re-inspections and any associated services.

You will receive an invoice from the Department of Finance after the inspection is within compliance and all paperwork has been completed.

This program is important and necessary to safeguard the lives and property of the people we protect. Therefore, we ask for your fullest cooperation so that together we can improve the fire safety for all the people who live and work in Howard County.