

Frequently Asked Questions- Fire

Q: Why does the Fire Department review my building plans?

A: The planning and permitting phase is arguably the most important phase of construction. It is important to “get things right” on paper and according to codes, before the buildings are built. It is cost and time prohibitive to build and re-build things several times in order to comply with codes when they can be simply built from approved plans.

Q: Where does the Fire Department get their authority to review plans, issue permits, and inspect my buildings?

A: Florida Statutes. State law requires that all building plans be reviewed by a State-certified Fire Inspector for fire-related issues and that inspections of fire components can only be done by a State-certified Fire Inspector. Issuing permits is our method to ensure this process occurs in a logical and cohesive order.

Q: My building is not new. Why is the Fire Dept still requiring plans and/or inspections when new tenants move in?

A: Anytime the conditions on your property change, reviewing the new conditions against the adopted codes is mandatory. The State of Florida has adopted the Florida Fire Prevention Code and the Florida Building Code as its’ governing documents for fire and building codes. Within these documents are rules on new construction, occupancy changes, tenant changes, remodels, and additions, to name a few. These minimum “rules” are designed to protect life safety, the property itself, surrounding properties, and first responders.

Q: Can you tell me if a building or unit is suitable for my business?

A: Yes, before you sign a lease to move into a building or unit, a courtesy inspection can be obtained from a fire inspector. Call 242-3264 to set up an inspection appointment.

Q: Do I need a fire permit when doing any kind of construction?

A: Yes, when there is any kind of construction that is being performed, a fire permit is most likely needed. Any kind of work regarding site work, new buildings, firewalls, remodeling, fire sprinklers, fire alarms, fire suppression, exhaust hoods, LP tanks and other construction work requires fire codes to be followed.

Q: Can you tell me what I need to obtain a permit?

A: Yes, we can tell you what forms you need to use and what information is required to be submitted to obtain a permit. We **cannot** tell you how to build your project or who to use as a contractor or architect/engineer. We can only review what is submitted to make sure it meets the minimum of the fire codes.

Q: Why do I need to follow fire codes?

A: The City of Cape Coral Fire Prevention and Protection Ordinance, adopts the Florida Fire Prevention Code which consists of NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 1, Uniform Fire Code and NFPA 101, Life Safety Code. These codes are important to obtain and retain life safety in buildings to prevent and/or minimize the loss of life in a fire situation.

Q: Can my business move into this particular unit?

A: It depends. Many factors are used to determine if certain occupancies are legally able to move into a certain unit with minimal cost and construction to the owner. Required firewalls between certain occupancies are generally the main issue and expense, along with fire sprinkler and fire alarm requirements. For example, if a day care is moving into a unit next to a realtor's office, the code for the firewall between the units is a 2 hour requirement in a non-sprinkled building. This is the code separation requirement between day care and business occupancies. But if the building is fire sprinkled, then the firewall requirements can be lessened by not more than 1 hour. This code and all other occupancy separation requirements can be found in NFPA 101- 6, Classification of Occupancy and Hazard of Contents.

Q: What are the Plans Reviewers specifically looking for?

A: There are several "big-ticket" items that are crucial to life safety, building preservation, and protection of first responders. First and foremost is getting people out of your building if a fire should occur, followed closely by extinguishment of that fire? Advance planning of egress, fire sprinkler, fire alarm, and building construction requirements provide for the most effective way to protect lives and your building. In addition, advance planning of Fire Department requirements such as property access and fire hydrants allow us to provide the quickest and safest response to your building.

Q: What happens after I get my permit issued?

A: Fire inspectors will perform all the required fire inspections. The number of inspections is dependent on the number and type of permits issued. A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or Certificate of Use (CU) will not be issued until all inspections are complete by all disciplines-not just fire. A business may not be opened before that CO and/or CU is issued.