



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

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FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSES TO YOUR BUILDING

Dear Building Owners, Managers, and Tenants:

Being prepared when the Fire Department responds to your building will assist them in performing their duties more efficiently. Below are items that building owners, managers, and tenants can do to assist the Fire Department. There is also a list of items that can increase fire safety in your building and a list of items to reduce unnecessary smoke detector activations:

Fire Alarm Activation – No Confirmation of Fire

1. Ensure the fire evacuation plan for the building is being followed by all occupants.
2. Designate a person to notify the Fire Department as soon as the fire alarm activates (Call 9-1-1).
3. Have a person with knowledge of the building and its equipment and systems meet the Fire Department (preferably the building engineer or manager). This person should have keys to all rooms and know the location of the fire alarm device or zone that activated.
4. Do not silence the fire alarm until the Fire Department arrives and gives their okay.
5. Do not reset the fire alarm system until the Fire Department has completed their investigation.

Fire Incidents

1. Ensure the fire evacuation plan for the building is being followed by all occupants.
2. Designate a person to notify the Fire Department (Call 9-1-1). Do not attempt to extinguish a fire, even a small one, before calling the Fire Department.
3. Have a person with knowledge of the building and its equipment and systems meet the Fire Department (preferably the building engineer or manager). This person should have keys to all rooms and know the location of the fire.
4. Give the Fire Department a list of the names and locations of all handicapped persons in the building. Handicapped persons should have a person designated to assist them during a fire to get out of the building or to an area of refuge in the building.
5. Provide elevator emergency operation keys to the Fire Department.
6. Ensure the Fire Command Center is unlocked and inform the Fire Department of its location.
7. Attempt to keep clear the main lobby or entrance and the area at the Fire Command Center.

Stuck Elevators

The safest way to remove people from a stuck elevator car is to have an elevator mechanic bring the car to a floor and manually open the floor and car doors. If this is not possible or a person in the elevator car is in need of immediate medical care, the Fire Department should be called to perform a rescue operation of the people in the car. The following should be done for stuck elevator cars:

1. Call an elevator mechanic.
2. Determine if anyone in the car has a medical problem that requires immediate assistance.
3. If anyone in the car needs immediate medical care or an emergency in the building necessitates the immediate removal of the people in the car, call the Fire Department. Specify if there is a medical emergency. Have the elevator door release keys available when the Fire Department arrives.
4. Reassure persons in the elevator car that you have requested help and indicate their approximate arrival time.

Before the Fire Department Arrives - General Fire Safety and Preparedness

Practicing fire safety can prevent fires or minimize injury and damage if a fire occurs. Below are requirements from the City's Fire Code that can help ensure that a building is safe from fire:

1. Prepare a fire evacuation plan, ensure all staff or employees understand the plan, and conduct fire drills twice a year.
2. Have all fire protection equipment and systems (fire alarm, sprinkler, standpipe, emergency electrical, and smoke control systems) tested yearly.
3. When the fire alarm system is temporarily out of service on one or more floors, provide a fire watch that makes hourly rounds and has the means to notify the Fire Department.
4. Ensure fire department connections for sprinkler and standpipe systems (pumper connections on the exterior of the building) have signs properly identifying the type of system and its location in the building.
5. Ensure elevators operate in the emergency recall (Phase I) and emergency use (Phase II) modes.
6. Ensure elevator emergency operation keys and door release keys are marked and readily available for Fire Department use (at the main desk or other prominent location).
7. Maintain a current list of handicapped persons at the main desk or other prominent location. Handicapped persons should have a person designated to assist them during a fire to get out of the building or to an area of refuge in the building.
8. Ensure the entrance to the Fire Command Center is clearly marked and the room contains all of the required equipment, including at least six emergency phone jacks, building plans and a telephone.
9. Ensure exit signs and emergency lighting are in proper working order.
10. Ensure that self-closing devices on fire doors operate properly and doors are not propped open, especially doors to exit stairways.
11. Ensure that stairway floor landings are properly marked with the stairway identification, floor number, number of floors to exit discharge, and if the stairway provides access to the roof.
12. Do not permit corridors or exits to be obstructed by storage.
13. Properly store and label hazardous materials, especially flammable and combustible liquids.
14. Only permit smoking in designated areas that have ashtrays and are free of combustible materials.

15. If possible, arrange with the management of a nearby building to temporarily house your employees in their building during a fire emergency in the winter.

Lessening Unnecessary Smoke Detector Activations

Smoke detectors have significantly improved life safety from fires in buildings. They can detect fire in its earliest stages and provide occupants with time to evacuate a building. Because they are so sensitive, they sometimes activate when there is no fire as a result of improper placement, lack of maintenance, or not protecting detectors from dust during renovation work. Below are recommendations that will lessen unnecessary smoke detector activations:

1. Have all smoke detectors cleaned during the annual inspection and testing of the fire alarm system.
2. Have smoke detectors checked for re-calibration every two years.
3. Do not install smoke detectors in these areas:
 - A. Where the temperature may go below freezing or exceed 100°F.
 - B. Within three feet of supply air vents or registers.
 - C. Where products of combustion are normally present, such as kitchens, dining areas where smoking is permitted, loading docks, and heater rooms. Install heat detectors in place of the smoke detectors.
4. Where smoke detectors are located in areas of buildings undergoing renovations, the detectors should be protected from dust during the renovation work by plastic covers (sold by detector manufacturers) or lightweight plastic bags. The covers or bags should be removed at the end of the workday after the dust has settled.

Fire Safety Questions or Training

If you have questions related to the Philadelphia Fire Code (contains requirements for fire safety in buildings) or general fire safety, call the Philadelphia Fire Department's Fire Code Unit at 215-686-1356. The Department's Fire Prevention Division provides fire safety and fire evacuation training. Their telephone number is 215-686-1382 or 83.