



Dennis Fire Department Fire Prevention



FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

FIRE PREVENTION CHECKLIST- To review prior to your inspection.

1. Is the address of your property clearly visible and marked in large numbers that can be easily seen from the street? Is the business name posted front and rear?

Ensuring that the building or suite is visibly lettered and numbered ensures that responders in an emergency situation can readily find the location in a timely manner. Address numbers shall contrast with their background. Numerals shall be not less than four inches in height for residential and at least six inches in height for all other buildings, structures, or portions thereof. No script numerals shall be used. For buildings not visible from the street a post or sign on the roadway shall indicate the property number. Multi occupancy commercial buildings must be labeled front, rear and on all doors with the name of the occupancy in six inches high contrasting letters. Tenant identification of the business on the rear door of strip malls.

2. Is there at least one fire extinguisher within 75 feet travel distance from anywhere in the business?

Ensuring that you or your employees have to travel no more than 75 feet to get to a location of a fire extinguisher ensures that the extinguisher can be quickly accessed.

3. Is the fire extinguisher mounted in a visible and accessible location?

Ensuring that the fire extinguisher(s) is mounted visibly saves confusion in an emergency. Also, the fire extinguisher should be mounted near an exit so if you decide not to attempt to extinguish the fire, you can quickly exit the building. Extinguishers having a gross weight not exceeding 40 lb shall be installed so that the top of the fire extinguisher is not more than 5 ft above the floor. Extinguishers having a gross weight greater than 40 lb shall be so installed that the top of the fire extinguisher is not more than 3 1/2 ft above the floor. In no case shall the clearance between the bottom of the extinguisher and the floor be less than 4 in.

4. Is the fire extinguisher classification 2A 10BC or greater? (Size can be found on the extinguisher's label.)

The fire extinguisher must be a minimum size rating of 2A-10BC dry chemical-type fire extinguisher to ensure that it is the proper size to put out a fire, should you have one. Does the commercial kitchen have a K Type extinguisher? Do your employees know the difference between an ABC and a K type extinguisher?

5. Have the fire extinguisher(s) been serviced within the last year? Checked monthly?

Fire Prevention Office
Dennis Fire Department 883 Main Street, West Dennis, MA 02670
Office 508-398-0363 Fax 508-398-5925

Fire extinguisher(s) in a commercial structure must be inspected by a fire extinguisher company annually to ensure that they are in working order. Keeping a monthly checklist (rear of all inspection tags) for extinguishers serves two purposes; it helps employees learn the location and type of extinguishers and it notifies managers when it is time for a yearly test.

6. Is there only one action to open each exit door? (No slide bolts, chains, bars are allowed to be on exit doors.)

Only one action is allowed on exit doors, and it must require less than 15 pound force open. This assures that in an emergency, the exit doors work and allow the people in the structure to exit without delay.

7. If the exit door has a key lock, do the required exit door(s) have a sign that reads, "This Door to Remain Unlocked during Business Hours"?

The signage needs to be affixed on all keyed exit doors to ensure that they remain unlocked at all times when the building is occupied.

8. Are exits identified with a lighted EXIT signs?

Exit signs direct occupants to the required exits and, when required, should be illuminated at all times and have a battery backup to provide operation during a power outage. All bulbs in the light shall be working. Replace any burnt out bulbs.

9. Is the exit(s) clear of obstructions so during an emergency, people can exit quickly and safely?

A path, equal to the width of the exit door, must remain clear and unobstructed at all times to allow persons in the building unrestricted exit. Are the exits free from snow and ice and properly lit?

10. Do the electrical panels have a 30-inch clearance in front for easy access?

A 30-inch clear area needs to be maintained around electrical panels at all times so maintenance can be safely performed. The doors to the electrical panels should remain closed to minimize the chance of sparks being thrown on stored materials in the event of an electrical failure. Storage should not be in electrical panel rooms.

11. Are the electrical panels properly marked to show all circuit breakers that provide power to all emergency lights and exit signs?

Properly marked breakers will allow you to test your emergency lights and exit signs periodically to ensure they will function correctly in case of an emergency.

12. Are all stored materials stacked so they are at least two feet below the ceiling?

Storage should be kept in an orderly manner and with at least two feet of clearance to the ceiling for buildings that are not equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. Eighteen inches of clearance is needed in buildings that do have an automatic sprinkler system. These clearances serve two important purposes: 1) They allow an area for smoke to collect in the event of a fire, giving persons in the building adequate time to exit, and 2) They provide a clear area so the spray pattern of sprinkler head is not blocked allowing the sprinkler system to function properly.

13. If you have emergency lighting, does it work?

Emergency lighting provides occupants the light needed to see the exits in an emergency. The lighting should be checked monthly to ensure that it is working properly. This should be tested monthly and a log be maintained. Curtains or draperies that may obscure an exit are not allowed.

14. Are the areas outside and around the building free of weeds, debris and trash?

Keeping the area around the building clear of high grass, weeds, and trash or debris reduces the fire risk around the outside of your building and also provides easy visibility for police officers patrolling the area. Massachusetts law now prohibits mulch from being applied within 18 inches of combustible building material on commercial structures or residential of more than six units. Combustible storage outside is regulated by fire codes.

15. Are extension cords used only for temporary wiring?

Extension cords used for temporary wiring should be of good quality and listed for the application for which they are being used. This minimizes the risk of the extension cord overheating and potentially causing a fire. Extension cords cannot be used for permanent wiring. Extension cords cannot run through walls or ceilings. Temporary electric power and lighting installations shall be permitted for a period not to exceed 90 days for holiday decorative lighting and similar purposes. (2011 NEC)

16. Do the electrical receptacles have no more than two items plugged into them?

Electrical outlets should have no more than one item per outlet plugged into them, which may include one multi plug outlet power strip with a circuit breaker for each 2 plugs in the outlet. Extension cords cannot be used permanently in any business. Only UL listed fused or circuit breaker surge suppressors may be used for non-permanent appliances like calculators, desk lamps, typewriters and computers. Surge suppressors must be plugged directly into the wall receptacle. Large fixed appliances like refrigerators, table saws and other large equipment cannot be used with extension cords or power cords. Following this practice minimizes the chance of circuit overload. Is the power strip rated for the amperage and does it have a circuit breaker.

17. Are the electrical appliances cords in good repair?

You can minimize the risk of electrical shock and fire by simply inspecting all appliance cords periodically for signs of fraying or damage, and replacing a cord if needed.

18. Are all electrical boxes, switches and outlets equipped with covers to protect the user from shock?

All electrical outlets must be equipped with a cover plate which protects the employees and customers in your building from the dangers of electrical shock and prevents sparks from exiting the outlet junction box in the event of an electrical failure.

19. Are all garbage containers at least 5 feet away from combustible walls, combustible roofs, windows or door openings?

Your trash cans and dumpsters must be kept a minimum of 5 feet away from exterior walls and roof overhangs. They should not be stored in the path of the exits. This minimizes the risk of your building catching on fire in the event of a fire in the dumpster. It also ensures that exits are not blocked. Dumpsters over six cubic yards require a permit from the fire department.

20. Are there quantities of flammable or combustible liquid being stored on site?

Small quantities of flammable or combustible liquids must be stored in approved and rated safety containers that are designed for the type of liquid being stored. Safety containers provide protection from damage and leakage of the material as well as leakage of vapors. Most flammable liquid storage requires a permit from the fire department. The inspector will review storage limits with the property owner.

21. If quantities of more than 5 gallons are being stored, are they in noncombustible cabinets or safety cans?

It is illegal to store any flammable liquids in your building but if you must do so, smaller quantities must be stored in approved and rated flammable liquid storage container(s) or cabinets approved and permitted by the fire department. If you store larger quantities, fire-rated construction requirements for your building are required.

22. If you have a sprinkler system in your building, has it been tested and serviced within the past 12 months?

Your sprinkler system must be checked annually by a licensed fire sprinkler company to ensure that the system is in working order. This report must be copied to the fire department. No decorations or attachments are allowed on sprinkler piping or heads. The sprinkler room must be labeled "SPRINKLER CONTROL ROOM" on the door to the area. The Fire Department Connection must be labeled with a red sign with white letters "FDC" *****This sprinkler report is to be supplied at time of inspection*****

23. If your building has a fire alarm system, has the system been tested and serviced within the past 12 months?

Your fire alarm must be checked annually by a licensed fire alarm company to ensure that the system is in working order. This report must be copied to the fire department. During your inspection we may have you test the alarm to insure the monitoring company is properly receiving the signal. A plan of all the zones in the fire alarm system must be mounted next to the fire alarm panel in a way to prevent tampering. A list of building contacts, managers shall also be posted. *****This fire alarm test report is to be supplied at time of inspection*****

24. Is the area around the furnace, water heater or any other heat producing appliance clear of combustible materials?

Keeping a minimum 36-inch clear area around any heat-producing appliance minimizes the chance of it igniting combustible materials due to the radiant heat the appliance produces.

25. If your building has a cooking equipment exhaust hood, has the hood been cleaned within the past 4, 6 or 12 months as required?

Proper cleaning of the vent hood at least once a year minimizes the chance of fire that could result from excessive grease build up. A certified company must clean the hood on a regular basis. The hood and all portions of the system will be inspected. ***** The last two cleaning reports are to be supplied at time of inspection*****

26. If your cooking equipment exhaust hood has a fire suppression system, has it been serviced in the last six months?

Proper maintenance of the hood suppression system must be performed every six months by a company licensed to service the system. *****The last 2 reports are to be supplied at time of inspection*****

27. Are exhaust fans clean and free of dust, grease and/or fat build up?

There are a number of instances where ceiling exhaust fans, clothes dryers and bathroom heater/light/fan combinations have failed and in some instances caught fire. The buildup of dust, grease and fat can lead to air flow through the unit being restricted. This can then result in increased operating temperatures and eventually a fire could be the result.

28. Are there any missing or damaged ceiling tiles in the building?

Missing, damaged and/or dislodged ceiling tiles negatively affects the integrity of the fire-safety system in the building. Replace any damaged or missing tiles and fix any dislodged tiles. Sheetrock is part of the fire protection system in a building and prevents the spread of fire. All holes in sheetrock shall be repaired. Draft stopping shall be intact.

29. Does the Fire Department have an up to date copy of all emergency contacts?

If the Fire Department does not have valid contact information, please fill out an Emergency Contact Form and either fax it to the Fire Department or provide it to the Inspector at time of inspection.

30. Are Fire Lanes marked and maintained and proper signage posted?

Fire lanes are designated by the Fire Department to allow access to the buildings and sprinkler system connections. They must remain open and accessible for fire trucks and ambulances. Signage and or curb marking is required. Fire lanes must be a minimum of 18 feet wide and 14 feet high. (527 CMR 1 – 18.2.3)

31. Is there a lock box on the building?

Any property that has an alarm system or sprinkler system should have a Fire Department Lock Box. This allows non-damaging access to the building by the fire department during off business hours to check for alarm conditions or sprinkler problems. The inspector can install the lock box for you. The cost for the lock box is \$ 70.00 and will be installed by the fire inspector.

32. Are chemicals stored properly?

Are any chemicals on site stored as to not create a hazard? Are pool chemical storage rooms labeled?

33. Are all smoke detectors working, in date and in place? Are Carbon Monoxide detectors present?

The fire codes require working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors to be in place and functioning. Code requires any replacement smoke alarm to be Photo electric type. Smoke alarms should be replaced after 10 years.

34. Barbeque Grills and propane tanks

Charcoal Grills should be used at least ten feet from a building and not used on combustible surfaces such as wood decks. Propane cannot be stored or used above the level of the first floor on decks or balconies in most instances and propane tanks should be ten feet from any door or window. Clearances for grills should follow the manufacturer's directions.

10.11.6 Cooking Equipment. For other than a single family dwelling, no hibachi, grill, or other similar devices used for cooking, heating, or any other purpose shall be used or kindled on any balcony, under any overhanging portion, or within 10ft (3 m) of any structure.

10.11.6.2 For other than one-and two-family dwellings, no hibachi, grill, or other similar devices used for cooking shall be stored on a balcony.

Propane patio heaters must be five feet from any exit and appropriate distances from buildings, overhangs and awnings.

Propane tanks must not be stored inside a building.

35. Are interior furniture, curtains, finishes and decoration rated for fire resistance?

All interior finishes must comply with flame spread and smoke production. The Building and fire codes in MA have standards for all interior finishes. Consult the inspectors and submit data on the finishes prior to purchasing. The codes do allow for flame retardant treating of certain fabrics and decorations.

36. Is the Occupancy load of a room clearly posted? Every room or space that is assembly occupancy shall have the occupant load of the room or space posted in a conspicuous place, near the main exit or exit access doorway from the room or space. Posted signs shall be of an approved legible permanent design, with a minimum 3 inch high numbers in contrasting colors, and shall be maintained by the owner or authorized agent.

37. Do you have an Emergency Planning and Preparedness Plan? The development of emergency plans, training and conducting of fire exit drills shall comply with the applicable requirements of the MA Fire Code. Places of Assembly. (a) General. The employees or attendants of places of public assembly shall be trained and drilled in the duties they are to perform in case of fire, panic or other emergency. (b) Egress plan. A plan showing the occupant load, seating diagram and location of exits and of aisles leading thereto shall be submitted to the head of the fire department and an approved copy shall be kept on the premises.