

Fire Safety Checklist for Businesses

The owner of any business is responsible to comply with the BC Fire Code. The Fire Code provided detailed regulations on how a space may be safely occupied and used.

Generally, the Building Code regulates construction with the intention of providing buildings that limit the spread of fire within and allow for both early detection if a problem occurs and safe exiting for the occupants. The Fire Code requires that these basic design features, detection systems and exits are maintained. It goes further, by requiring regulation or eliminating of hazards within and around the structure.

How this is done varies from occupancy to occupancy, as well as on the scale of the building.

In order to save time and prepare for your Fire Service inspection prior to the issuing of a business licence, your premises should be as close to a completed space as possible. That is, the building permit must be completed; finishing such as wall coverings and carpet should be in place, furnishings such as cabinets, shelves, desks and chairs should be in their intended locations.

It's difficult to provide a checklist that applies to all occupancies due to the significant differences between a propane storage yard and a retail store. However, the following items will give you an indication of what is generally looked at:

- An ASTT certified technician from a Fire Protection company (for listing of contractors, check the Yellow Pages) must have performed an annual inspection/test on (when applicable):
 - Emergency lighting
 - Extinguishers (you will need to have a minimum of 1 x 2A 10BC extinguisher mounted in a conspicuous location).
 - Fire alarm system
 - Sprinkler system
- Exit signs are in working order – replace bulbs if they are out.
- A clear path of at least 1.1 m is required to all required exits.
- Fire emergency pull stations are visible and unobstructed.
- Electrical panels have a 1m clear path to them.
- Electrical junction and switch boxes will have cover plates – no exposed wiring.
- Make sure all storage is located a minimum of 18" below all sprinklers
- Exits stairwells and corridors must be clear of all storage
- Required fire separations are complete – no holes, large or small. Openings, such as doors, are on automatic closures that allow the door to close and latch.

- If you are opening a restaurant, ensure that the hood system is clean and that the “K” type extinguishing system has had its 6 month maintenance service and testing by an ASTT certified technician from a Fire Protection company (for listing of contractors, check the Yellow Pages). In addition to regular extinguisher requirements, a K type portable extinguisher is required to be mounted within the kitchen area.

Again, since it’s difficult to provide a checklist that applies to all occupancies, this may not be a complete list of what you will be required to do to meet your obligations under the Fire Code. However, if you address these issues and apply the spirit of the list to other situations you may have in your business, you will decrease the likelihood of a reinspection being necessary, along with the accompanying delays that will affect your opening date.

If a Premises requires more than one re-inspection to determine that an unsatisfactory condition has been addressed, then the Owner of the Premises shall pay the re-inspection fee for the second re-inspection and for each subsequent re-inspection per the fee structure set out in Schedule “B” of the Fire and Life Safety Bylaw No. 2201, 2019