



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

General Order Number: 12-02	Effective Date: January 2010
Division: Inspections and Investigations	
Chapter: Dwelling Inspection Program	
By Order of the Fire Chief: Marc S. Bashoor	Revision Date: N/A

POLICY

This General Order shall establish an inspection program for residential occupancies, single and multifamily, i.e., apartments, hotels, dormitories, and boarding houses. Each year, a number of fire deaths occur in these occupancies. An effective inspection program can help reduce this toll by providing better awareness and a safer environment (Life Safety Code (LSC) 101, 4-1.1).

DEFINITIONS

N/A

PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES

1. General Information

Goals

The goals of the Dwelling Inspection Program are:

- To increase the reliability of installed automatic fire sprinklers and smoke alarms through regular inspections.
- To increase public awareness of home fire hazards and current fire prevention measures.
- To increase positive individual contacts between members of the fire service and the general public.
- To increase the likelihood that residential occupancies will be found in compliance with relevant fire codes and standards (Subtitle 11, NFPA 101, etc.).

2. Single-Family Dwellings - Town Houses, Semidetached Houses, Etc. (NFPA 101, 24 2006 edition)

When Fire Department personnel enter a single-family dwelling, as a result of an owner's request (864-SAFE) to have an "Operation Safe Families" Fire and Life Safety Survey conducted, a "SAFE .21 Form" shall be used to validate the inspectional task.

If entry is due to a Post Incident Neighborhood Intervention Program (PINIP) operation or on a non-emergency basis, a reasonable attempt should be made, by means of a visual survey, to determine if the building is equipped with required automatic sprinkler system and smoke alarms.



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A smoke alarm inspection should not be attempted when extremely serious or sensitive conditions exist, such as severe injury or a non fire related death of an occupant. If the single-family dwelling is not in compliance, (i.e., no smoke alarm or the smoke alarm is not operational), the occupant shall be issued a Smoke Alarm Correction Order and given an explanation of the compliance procedure contained on the form. The owner/occupant, upon compliance, should sign and date the appropriate portion of the Smoke Alarm Correction Order and return the entire order to the Fire Inspections and Code Enforcement/Special Hazards (FI/CE/SH) Office.

If access is denied or resistance is met, Fire Department personnel shall comply with the wishes of the owner/occupant and cease attempts to complete the inspection. At this time, the officer-in-charge (OIC) shall inform the owner/occupant that the case will be referred to FI/CE/SH for further action. The OIC shall then complete a Smoke Alarm Correction Order and write "access denied" or "resistance met" in place of the "name of the occupant." The station copy (pink) must be retained at the first due station, the remaining copies, along with the original, should be sent to BFP for follow-up efforts.

A Smoke Alarm Correction Order book shall be carried on all Fire Department vehicles. The issuer shall sign and ensure that all required information is listed accurately. Copies shall be distributed in accordance with directions printed on the form. The issuer shall ensure that the "station copy" is kept in a file at the first due fire station for further reference.

Career station officers shall be responsible for maintaining a Smoke Detector Correction Order file. The number of smoke detector inspections and courtesy (single family) fire prevention surveys conducted shall be included in the monthly report under the specific categories for those items.

Upon request, Department personnel will conduct a smoke alarm function check and/or a courtesy fire prevention survey and furnish a report to the owner or occupant, listing results and recommendations.

Citizens will be made aware of the services offered by the Fire Department via pamphlets and public service media announcements. Appropriate fire safety literature, i.e., "3 keys," etc., should be given to occupants during inspections. Smoke detectors will be provided, if available.

3. Multifamily Occupancies, Apartments, Condominiums, Dormitories, Boarding Houses, Hotels, and Motels

This category is defined as buildings containing three or more living units with independent cooking and bathroom facilities, whether designated as apartment house, tenement, garden apartments, condominium, or by any other name (NFPA 101 30-1.3.2, 2006 Edition.).

The Fire Department shall conduct inspections of these dwelling units and/or their fire safety records on an annual basis. Inspections should be scheduled, well in advance, with the appropriate management representative or maintenance personnel. At this time, the station officer shall present a copy of the Operation Safe Families, Fire & Safety Survey Inspection Form, PGC Form 4052 (1/93) to the owner/agent and complete the Notice of Dwelling Inspection Section which includes



the schedule inspection date and time. PGC Form 4052 is to be maintained in the property fire safety log book as their directory of understood code or standards requirements.

Smoke Alarm Inspections

Smoke detector inspections shall be conducted in the following manner:

- Confer with the property owner, manager, or representative at the scheduled inspection time.
- Check the fire safety log records of required annual smoke alarm inspections conducted by owner or agent. The records must comply with Subtitle 11, Sections 11-291 and 11-292. Maintenance of the Fire Safety Devices and Equipment, which stipulates that the annual inspection of smoke detectors is the responsibility of the property owner or agent. If records are incomplete, outdated, or nonexistent, note this on the first notice inspection form, directing that the deficiency be corrected. Further, Fire Department personnel are to conduct a visual and operational inspection of at least 10% of the smoke alarms installed in units on the property, in accordance with the provisions of IV.B.3.
- Visual/operational smoke alarms inspections shall consist of a random check of alarms annually if management records are not in good order. The following criteria shall be used for re-certification. A minimum test of 10 to 20% of the smoke alarms shall be conducted by Fire Department personnel.

The following criteria shall be used to determine the minimum acceptable pass rate:

Number of Detectors Checked	Required Minimum Pass Rate
1-10	100 %
21-over	95%

- Checks are to be done on a random basis. A different random test group should be checked each year until all detectors are inspected.

When the required minimum pass rate is achieved, the owner or agent shall be directed by Fire Department representative to correct any specific deficiencies found by use of a Fire Department Notice/Correction Order. Replacement of defective detectors is to be completed within 24 hours. In addition, follow-up inspections are to be conducted by Fire Department personnel in a timely fashion. The owner or agent shall be advised of the results of each inspection and informed that the requirement in the current edition of the Subtitle 11 Sec. 11-258 LSC 30-3.4.4. will be conveyed to the owner/representative where bad or unreliable smoke detectors are noted.

If the required minimum pass rate is not achieved, a correction order/notice is to be issued requiring the owner or agent to test all smoke alarms in the complex or building and to schedule a follow-up (10% spot check) inspection within 30 days. Should the follow-up inspection result in a less than minimum pass rate, the matter will be referred to FI/CE/SH for further enforcement action. (When



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referrals are deemed necessary, the affected owner or agent shall be informed by the issuer of the correction order that such action is planned.)

Fire Department personnel are to exercise caution when entering apartments to witness smoke detector inspections. They are to be accompanied by authorized agents of the owner/managers (e.g., electrician, maintenance personnel) and all should knock and announce their presence when inspecting.

Annual Inspections

The following items shall be inspected annually in multifamily dwellings and as the opportunity presents itself in single-family dwellings:

- Automatic sprinkler systems are to be inspected in both single and multifamily dwellings where required to ensure the following:
 - Fire Department connections, where applicable, are accessible and in proper working order, free of debris and adequately secured. (The drain must function properly to prevent freezing during cold weather.
 - The water supply is tagged and secure.
 - Sprinkler heads are in place, undamaged, and their operation will not be compromised due to paint, ornaments, etc.
 - All storage should have a minimum clearance of at least 18 inches below the sprinkler head.
 - Flow switch, where required, is wired to the building's internal alarm system.
 - In all multifamily occupancies, nonliving hazardous areas (such as laundry rooms, storage rooms, furnace rooms, workshop areas, etc.) shall be protected by automatic sprinklers or should be free of storage and equipped with an AC hard wired smoke detector, tied to that building's fire alarm, and secured against entry by unauthorized personnel.

NOTE: Refer to the Department policy statement on how protection and supervision of these hazardous areas shall be achieved.

- Exits are to be checked to ensure that corridors, stairs, and exit doors are unobstructed and exit doors are properly operating and will allow free passage of occupants to safety without the use of a key, tool, or other such device.
- Fire alarm systems are to be tested by having maintenance personnel briefly activate the system and/or provide third party certification or Fire Department personnel witness their proper operation.
- Standpipes - a visual inspection of the standpipe system should be made. Items such as blind caps, globe valves, etc., should be checked and any deficiencies ordered corrected. The Fire Department connection should have unobstructed access, be adequately secured, and free of debris. (The drain must function properly to prevent freezing during cold weather.)



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- Check for serious life safety problems that may exist, such as kerosene heaters, missing fire extinguishers, window bars, etc.

Career station officers shall be responsible for:

- Maintaining a status log on all inspections of multifamily dwellings in the first due area. This shall include: date and time of inspections, data pertaining to deficiencies noted and files maintained, re-inspections when necessary, and smoke detector worksheets.
- Ensuring that inspections are conducted annually. The number of inspections or re-inspections conducted will be part of the station's monthly report.
- Maintaining a log of single-family dwelling inspections in such a manner that information about a particular residence can be readily retrieved.
- Single-family dwelling inspections are also to be reported monthly.
- Knox Box key security/accountability - on station key rings.

Inspecting personnel shall notify the Public Safety Communication (PSC) 30 minutes prior to conducting alarm system flow tests. In order to avoid liability, Fire Department personnel normally should not actually touch or activate any fire alarm, detection, or suppression system. A representative of the building management or the owner should perform the actual hands on activation necessary to test or demonstrate the proper equipment operation. Fire Department personnel should only witness these tests or accept contractor certification that the appropriate/required inspection, service, testing, or maintenance was performed.

The Prince George's County Fire Safety Law, Subtitle 11, Section 11-291, requires property management to inspect and maintain inspection and service records of the following:

- Fire Pump - operated once every 30 days.
- Fire Alarm - operated once every 30 days
- Standpipe/Sprinkler - flowed once a year
- Fire Extinguishers - services annually, checked monthly

NOTE: All dates and contractor certification areas are to be filled in (as they apply to the property being inspected) prior to the final inspection. A guide for understanding the NFPA Fire Code requirements is found in the consolidated version of Inspecting, Testing and Maintenance Manual, which is listed as NFPA 25.

4. Battalion Commanders' Responsibilities

Battalion Commanders shall:

- Monitor the program to ensure that the inspection program remains on schedule.
- Assist station supervisors, as necessary, in order to ensure the success of the residential inspection program.
- If necessary, make arrangements on a battalion level to even out the workload by assigning units and/or personnel from other areas to assist stations that have an inordinate amount of



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inspections required within the first due area. Periodic updates from station officers will be required in order to determine the need for assistance and the most efficient and equitable means to provide it.

- Include the total number of single-family inspections on the battalion monthly report.
- Ensure that an up-to-date master list of all battalion multifamily apartment buildings and projects is maintained. The list shall contain the name of the apartment complex, the total number of individual units, and the address and phone number of the management office.

REFERENCES

N/A

FORMS / ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1 – Smoke Detector Installation Order

Attachment #2 – Apartment Complex Inspection Report

Attachment #3 – Fire and Life Safety Survey: Multifamily Dwellings

Attachment #4 – Guidelines for Inspecting Hazardous Areas in Existing Multifamily Dwellings

Attachment #5 – Correction Order