



FAQ's

Commercial Life/Safety Inspection Program

Fire Inspectors working for the City of San Rafael Fire Prevention Bureau, under the supervision of the Fire Marshal, will soon be performing periodic life/safety inspections of commercial buildings throughout the City of San Rafael. The program is being reinstated as part of a proactive Fire Prevention Program to help ensure that our business community, our citizens and the public are safe from disasters related to fire and earthquake.

The following are a few of our most frequently asked questions:

How involved is the inspection?

We will be conducting a relatively routine, visual inspection of the premises to ensure the basic safety of the building or tenant space. The sorts of things being looked at include exiting, storage of combustibles, electrical hazards, and sprinkler, fire alarm and extinguishing systems. We have attached a list of the most common items we find that need attention. It would be helpful if you review this list and address any shortcomings prior to our visit.

How long will the inspection take?

The average small to medium-sized business will take between 15 and 45 minutes, depending on size and complexity.

Can I schedule a specific time?

We will be working in your neighborhood for several days, and will initially visit your business during regular hours, typically between 10:00 and 4:00. If the timing of this initial visit is inconvenient for you, we will reschedule the inspection with you at that time. If your business is only open during limited hours, and is closed when we come by for the initial visit, we will leave a notice with a contact name and number for you to call to set up an inspection.

Will there be a cost to my business for this service? How about for reinspections?

The cost for the program is paid for out of your business license fee, and there is no additional cost at the time of inspection. As far as additional trips needed to check on corrections or repairs; we will perform up to 2 reinspections for you at no additional cost.

How soon must corrections be made?

Corrective action should begin immediately. For most simple issues we will try to return in a week. If the issue is more complicated, an appropriate amount of time will be allowed.

Are corrections the responsibility of the Tenant or Building Owner?

That is a contractual matter between the two, and usually spelled out in the lease. Speak to your landlord for clarification on this matter.

Pre-Inspection Checklist

Dear Business Owner:

Your cooperation with this important commercial Life/Safety inspection program is greatly appreciated. Prior to the Life/Safety inspection, please ensure the following items are in order. This list is not meant to cover everything, but represents some of the more common items which often need attention.

Thank you for your help in keeping San Rafael a safe community.

1. Building address number posted, clearly visible in contrasting colors and legible from the street fronting the property.
2. Required exits are clearly visible, with unobstructed pathways, which are maintained clear of storage for easy access.
3. Exits doors have hardware that unlatches with only one operation.
4. Ensure exit signs are clearly visible and illuminated.
5. Fire doors are maintained in the closed position, or held open by an approved device. The use of door stops, wedges, and other non approved hold-open devices are prohibited.
6. Fire extinguishers are installed, clearly visible, readily accessible and serviced within the past 12-months; with current inspection tag attached.
7. Electrical wiring and connections are covered; cover plates and doors are installed for electrical outlets, junction boxes and circuit breaker panels. Also maintain a minimum of 3 feet clearance around electrical panels, and see that electrical fuses and circuit breakers are labeled.
8. Electrical extension cords are not to be affixed to structures, extended through walls, windows, ceilings or floors, under doors or floor-coverings. Limited uses of power strips are OK, if they are polarized, properly grounded, and have over-current protection.
9. Fire alarm and suppression systems are maintained in working order, with records of inspection, testing and maintenance activities available on site.
10. Housekeeping upon the premises, both inside and outside, is maintained orderly; no accumulation of combustible waste or rubbish, vegetation is trimmed and removed.
11. Storage of combustible materials in buildings shall be orderly. The top of storage shall be maintained at least 2-feet below the ceiling in non-sprinklered buildings and at least 18-inches below the sprinkler deflectors in sprinklered buildings.