



# **DIVISION OF FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY**

## **Guidelines For FIRE & LIFE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

Revised February 2025

The information in this document is intended to provide assistance and guidance with DPH'S regulatory oversight process for health care facilities requiring licensure through Bureau of Nursing Homes & Medical Services. This document is subject to updates on an ongoing basis so please continually check our website and update your copy to confirm that you have the most current version



DPH Fire and Life Safety is a Section of the Bureau of Nursing Homes & Medical Services. Our inspectors are certified as Fire Marshals by the SC State Fire Marshal's Office, International Codes Council and the National Fire Protection Agency. The purpose of our inspections are to ensure that licensed facilities operate in a safe manner and comply with all applicable DPH Regulations, Fire Codes and NFPA Standards. As well as those facilities that must also comply with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Regulations. This document contains information to assist facilities in preparation for Fire & Life Safety inspection, Firewatch, Fire Drill and contact information.

**Fire & Life Safety Inspections are conducted on a routine basis (generally 15-18 months) of the following DPH licensed healthcare facilities:**

*Community Residential Care Facilities - Regulation 61-84*

*Crisis Stabilization Units - Regulation 61-125*

*Day Care Facilities for Adults - Regulation 61-75*

*Ambulatory Surgery Facilities - Regulation 61-91*

*Hospitals and Institutional General Infirmaries - Regulation 61-16*

*Inpatient Facilities that Treat Individuals for Psychoactive Substance Abuse or Dependence Regulation - 61-93*

*Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities – Regulation 61-13*

*Hospices - Regulation 61-78*

*Nursing Homes - Regulation 61-17*

*Renal Dialysis Facilities - Regulation 61-97*

*Residential Treatment Facilities for Children & Adolescents - Regulation 61-103*



## **Our Fire and Life Safety Investigators are:**

**Todd McAlhany, Director (803) 465-1273 – [mcalhadt@dph.sc.gov](mailto:mcalhadt@dph.sc.gov)**

**David Moody, Investigator IV (803) 465-7318 - [moodyda@dph.sc.gov](mailto:moodyda@dph.sc.gov)**

Berkeley, Charleston, Clarendon, Horry, Georgetown.

**Mike Winnington, Investigator IV (803) 609-0290 - [winninmj@dph.sc.gov](mailto:winninmj@dph.sc.gov)**

Greenville, Fairfield, Laurens, Newberry, Spartanburg, Chester, Cherokee and Union.

**Derrick Jones, Investigator IV (803) 465-4797 - [jonesdl@dph.sc.gov](mailto:jonesdl@dph.sc.gov)**

Edgefield, McCormick, Greenwood, Richland, Saluda, Abbeville, Anderson, Oconee and Pickens.

**Jordan Dempsey, Investigator IV (803) - [dempsejm@dph.sc.gov](mailto:dempsejm@dph.sc.gov)**

Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Bamberg, Beaufort, Colleton, Calhoun, Dorchester, Lexington, Hampton, Jasper and Orangeburg,

**Terry Mueller, Investigator IV (803-381-4564) - [muelletj@dph.sc.gov](mailto:muelletj@dph.sc.gov)**

Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Kershaw, Lancaster, Lee, Marlboro, Marion, Sumter, Williamsburg and York.



**During a DPH Fire and Life Safety Inspection you will be asked for the following applicable documents. These reports are required per your specific regulation, the International Fire Code and referenced NFPA standards.**

Carbon Monoxide Monthly Test Log  
Emergency Light Monthly Test Log  
Facility Disaster and Evacuation Plan  
Facility Fire Plan  
Fire Alarm System Inspection Report  
Fire Drill Reports  
Fire Response Training Reports  
Flame Resistant Treatment for Fabrics  
Generator Service Report and Run Logs  
HVAC System Inspection report  
Last two Hood Suppression System Inspection Reports  
Medical Gas Inspection Report  
Facility Maintenance documents  
Smoke/Fire Damper Inspection Reports  
Sprinkler System Inspection Reports (Annual & Quarterly)  
Corrective documentation for deficiencies noted on any reports



**After a careful review of the documents the Investigator will conduct a tour with a representative of the facility. The tour can include all areas of the facility. During the tour the investigator will look for:**

Clear and unobstructed access to exits.

Exit doors that operate without undue force

Delayed egress door locks that have the required signage and operate within the allowed time.

Accessible fire alarm pull stations

Accessible fire extinguishers, that are ready for use and marked for monthly inspection.

Properly operating exit signs and emergency lights.

Fire rated doors that close properly and are not blocked or obstructed in any way.

Smoke detectors that are located too close to HVAC vents or ceiling fans.

Sprinkler heads that are coated with dust, paint or have items that are too close or that could obstruct the flow of the device.

Extension cords and power strips that do not meet the minimum requirements of UL60601-1 for Medical Electrical Equipment, UL 1363 and UL 1363A for Special Purpose Relocatable Power Taps

Improper use of appliances that heat or cool. These appliances, when allowed must be plugged directly into an approved outlet.

The use of space heaters that are not allowed per the regulations, not UL listed for the space where they are being used, that are located too close combustibles.

Blocked or obstructed electrical panels.

Improper storage of combustible materials



**In most facilities we will also conduct above ceiling inspections that will determine if there are:**

Cables or wires that are resting on the ceiling grid.

Cables or wires that are attached to the fire sprinkler system piping.

Open electrical junction boxes

Penetrations to rated walls or barriers

**In the kitchen areas we will look for:**

Location of BC fire extinguisher and K class fire extinguisher if you have a hood fire suppression system.

Location of hood suppression activation.

Location of fire alarm pull station

We may ask a staff member what the procedures in case of fire in the kitchen are.

**We may ask questions of your staff concerning:**

Where is the closest fire extinguisher?

What are your responsibilities in case of fire?

What type of extinguisher would you use in a particular situation?

Where is the closest fire alarm pull station?

How are residents accounted for during a fire or fire drill?

After the inspection is completed, our inspectors will review the inspection with you and advise you of any violations, we may make recommendations for improvement and answer any questions that you have. An inspection report will be emailed to you, normally within five days. If documents are needed to show that a cited violation has been corrected, you will be advised that a Plan of Correction is required to be returned. Plans of Correction are required to be returned to DPH within fifteen days of the receipt of the inspection report.

The fire inspection is not a guarantee that your facility is safe from fire and life safety hazards, which is a continuing task that should be a part of each member of your staff and your residents/patients daily routine. Our goal is to assist in educating you and your staff to maintain a facility free of fire and life safety hazards. We are always available to answer questions or to assist you in finding the answers to your fire and life safety questions.



## **Fire and Life Safety Maintenance Requirements**

### **Fire alarm system:**

- Inspected annually by licensed technician.
- Biennial sensitivity test
- Battery replacement according to manufactures recommendation.

### **Sprinkler System:**

- Inspected annually by a licensed technician.
- Quarter inspection by a qualified or competent person.
- Five-year internal obstruction inspection.
- Five-year gauges replaced or recalibrated.

### **Hood Suppression System:**

- Semi-annual inspection by a licensed technician.
- Cylinder hydrostatically tested every 12 years or manufacturers recommendation.

### **Fire Extinguishers:**

- Annual inspection by a licensed technician.
- Monthly inspection, tags initialed and dated.
- Water or wet chemical hydrostatically tested every five years.
- Dry chemical hydrostatically tested every 12 years.

### **Generator:**

- Routine maintenance based on manufacturer's recommendation.
- Weekly inspection
- Monthly load test of at least 30 minutes.
- Written documentation of test

### **Emergency Lights:**

- Monthly 30-second test
- Annual 90-minute test
- Written documentation of test

### **Carbon Monoxide Detectors:**

- Monthly test
- Written documentation of test

### **Battery Operated Smoke Alarms:**

- Monthly test
- Written documentation of test



## **Smoke and Fire Dampers**

- Tested and inspected one year after installation, then tested and inspected every four years, hospitals every six years.

## **Fire Watch**

**Fire watches** are required when a fire protection feature is out of service for more than four hours.

*2021 SCFC 901.7 Systems out of service. Where a required fire protection system is out of service, the fire department and the fire code official shall be notified immediately and, where required by the fire code official, the building shall either be evacuated, or an approved fire watch shall be provided for all occupants left unprotected by the shut down until the fire protection system has been returned to service.*

Where utilized, fire watches shall be provided with at least one approved means for notification of the fire department and their only duty shall be to perform constant patrols of the protected premises and keep watch for fires. The preferred method of contact for fire watch notification is: [firewatch@dph.sc.gov](mailto:firewatch@dph.sc.gov)

Fire watch notifications may also be made at:

(803) 545-4215 DPH Office  
(803) 545-4370 DHL Office  
(803) 545-4212 fax

**The International Fire code also requires notification to the:**

Insurance carrier, the alarm company, building owner manager, fire department and other authorities having jurisdiction.

*See Page 11 for a sample fire watch Log*





**To report a fire:** DHFC shall be notified immediately via telephone or email regarding any fire in the facility and followed by a complete written report to include fire department reports if any, to be submitted within a time frame determined by the facility but not to exceed 72 hours from the occurrence of the fire.

(803) 545-4215 DHFC office - normal operating hours (0830-1700 hrs.)  
(803) 920-3153 After Hours/Holiday (Emergency Number Only)

## **Fire Drills**

**Fire Drills are required for all facilities, the intervals and requirements may vary depending on the facility type. Specific requirements may be found in the regulations and The International Fire Code section 405**

**At a minimum all fire drills should include:**

Activating the fire alarm system if so equipped. *(Notify the alarm monitoring agency or fire department having jurisdiction prior to activation for fire drills)*

Use different exits so that occupants will not depend on a single exit.

Conduct drills at varying times and under varying conditions.

*The most basic fire protection feature of any facility is the ability to evacuate.*

***For a sample fire drill report see page 12***



## **Training**

### **Safety Presentations:**

Fire and Life Safety Investigators also conduct Fire and Life Safety presentations when requested by interested organizations. Our topics are generally items that are most frequently observed, changes to the regulations or codes, tips that will help you to maintain a safe facility but most importantly it allows for questions and answers that pertain to items of interest to you. If your group or organization is interested, please contact one of our Fire and Life Safety Investigators.

### **Fire Response Training:**

Fire Response Training including hands on fire extinguisher training is available through the DPH Office of Fire and Life Safety to facilities at no cost. The training covers choosing the correct extinguisher for the type of fire, activating the fire alarm system, notifying 911, proper procedures for searching, evacuating the facility to a designated assembly area and conducting fire drills. The training can also be customized for your particular facility's needs. If your facility is interested in this training, please contact Todd McAlhany at: [mcalhadt@dph.sc.gov](mailto:mcalhadt@dph.sc.gov) for more information and scheduling



## FIRE WATCH LOG

Facility Name \_\_\_\_\_

Begin Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_ End Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for  
Firewatch \_\_\_\_\_

Notification made to:

Alarm Company \_\_\_\_\_ Fire Dept. \_\_\_\_\_ DPH \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance Carrier \_\_\_\_\_

**Responsible Party** \_\_\_\_\_

Fire watch personnel must perform continuous rounds so that facility or affected areas of the facility are checked at least every \_\_\_\_ minutes until the fire watch has ended and proper notifications have been made.

I certify (by my initials below) that I completed a tour of my entire assigned area at the following times:							
Time	Initials		Time	Initials		Time	Initials



## Fire Drill Report

Facility \_\_\_\_\_

Person Conducting Drill \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Shift \_\_\_\_\_

Weather Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Did all residents evacuate: **Y / N**      Were all residents accounted for: **Y / N**

Number of residents evacuated: \_\_\_\_\_ Assembly Point \_\_\_\_\_

Did All Staff Members Participate: **Y / N**      Were all staff members accounted for: **Y / N**

Number of staff members on duty \_\_\_\_\_ Number of staff members participating \_\_\_\_\_

Was the Fire alarm system activated: **Y / N**      Was alarm Monitoring Agency Notified: **Y / N**

How was Fire Drill notification made: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Time required for Evacuation: \_\_\_\_\_

