



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Assembly, Educational, Institutional and Multi-unit Residential Occupancies

This guide may be used as a checklist to do an inventory to determine if you are following appropriate steps to insure the proper maintenance of your building. For information not contained here, you may obtain a copy of the fire and building codes adopted by the state of California through the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) at 800 423-6587.

1. PERMITS

- _____ a. Permit required
A permit is required to operate a place of public assembly. The annual inspection form constitutes the permit when the inspection is completed.
A permit is required for the use of open flame or candles in assembly areas.
A permit is required from Planning and Development Review for any change in use or occupancy or for electrical, plumbing, HVAC or structural work.

2. ACCESS

- _____ a. Provide Knox Box
When access to an area or structure is difficult, a Knox Box may be required when necessary for life-saving or fire-fighting purposes. See [Knox Box Requirements and Procedure for Ordering](#).
- _____ b. Premises identification
Approved numbers or addresses on a contrasting background shall be placed on all new and existing buildings and shall be plainly visible from the street fronting the property. See [Premises Identification](#) and [Illuminated Directory](#).
- _____ c. Fire lane
Approved signs or markings shall be provided and maintained for fire apparatus access roads to identify such roads and prohibit the obstruction thereof. See [Fire Access Roadways](#)
- _____ d. Stairway identification
Provide standardized signs in stairways of new/existing buildings of more than 3 stories to indicate upper and lower terminus. A sign standard is available from the FCIP Advisor at 619 533-4400.

3. MEANS OF EGRESS

- _____ a. Exits required
Two exits are required in a public assembly when there are more than 49 occupants (3 exits are required in a public assembly with an occupant load of 500); in a school with more than 49 students (E1); in a day-care (E3) with more than six; in any building with more than 9 occupants above or below the first floor; and for the third floor and above.

- _____ b. Room location
Rooms used for day-care, kindergarten, first or second grade may not be located above or below the first floor unless the building is sprinklered and there are two separate exits directly to the exterior for the exclusive use of the children. Exceptions allow some variations if certain conditions are met.
- _____ c. Exit signs required
Exit signs must be installed when two exits are required (except at an obvious main exit and in rooms or areas of hospitals, nursing homes and other institutional facilities when the occupant load is less than 50) and where otherwise necessary to indicate the direction of egress. Exit signs may not be concealed or obstructed.
- _____ d. Exit sign, path & area illumination
Signs shall be internally or externally illuminated and must be provided with battery back-up power or power from an on-site generator (radioactive signs are acceptable). Means of egress shall be illuminated whenever the building is occupied. When the occupant load is more than 100, there should be back-up power for the emergency lighting as well.
- _____ e. Locking devices
Exit doors shall be able to be opened from the inside, with one hand motion, and without the use of a key or any special knowledge or effort. In a public assembly with an occupant load of less than 300 and on the main exit of any church, key-locking hardware may be used on the main exit when there is a sign posted on or adjacent to the door:
THIS DOOR MUST REMAIN UNLOCKED DURING BUSINESS HOURS.
- _____ f. Special egress control devices
Special egress control devices of the time-delay type are permissible when installed under permit in certain occupancies which are fully sprinklered and provided with an approved automatic smoke detection system (and other more detailed requirements).
- _____ g. Panic hardware
In public assembly, school or daycare and in institutional buildings, panic hardware is required when the occupant load is more than 49, with the exception of the main exit as noted in #3e. The unlatching force shall not exceed 15 psi.
- _____ h. Door swing
Exit doors must swing in the direction of travel when the occupant load is more than 49. Doors must be pivoted or side-hinged swinging type, except where the occupant load is less than 10.
- _____ i. Obstructions
Obstructions, including storage, may not be placed in the required width of the means of egress, nor may the exit door be obstructed. Exit doors must be maintained operable at all times.
- _____ j. Bonding of chairs
In a public assembly, bonding of chairs in groups of three or more is required when the occupant load is more than 300 and the seats are not fixed to the floor.

- _____ k. Aisle width
Aisles which are part of the exit access shall be provided with a minimum clear width of 36 inches when furnishings or other obstructions are on one side only, and 44 inches when on both sides. In areas serving employees only, the minimum aisle width is 24 inches.
- _____ l. Posting of room capacity
In a public assembly, when fixed seats are not installed, the capacity shall be posted in a conspicuous location near the main exit of the room.
- _____ m. Security bars on windows or doors
Security bars in rooms used for sleeping must be equipped with a quick-release mechanism and be provided with smoke detectors as required by the building code.
- _____ n. Fire escapes
Fire escapes must be maintained in good operating conditions and their operation remains unobstructed.

4. FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

- _____ a. Maintenance
Fire protection systems and equipment (sprinklers, standpipes, alarm systems, hood systems, extinguishers, hydrants, etc.) shall be maintained operative at all times and shall be extended, altered or augmented whenever the building is changed. The fire department must be notified when a fire protection system is out of service and upon restoration of service. Standby personnel may be authorized for a system which is out of service. See [Disrupted Service-Fire Protection Systems](#).
- _____ b. Inspection and testing
Title 19 is the standard for "inspection" (i.e. maintenance) and testing of sprinkler and standpipe systems. Maintenance must be done quarterly for sprinklers, semi-annually for standpipe systems. A "Service" test must be performed every five years on both sprinkler and standpipe systems. Alarm systems shall be inspected and tested per UFC Standard 10-2 (NFPA 72 as amended). Extinguishers must be serviced annually, except halon, which is every six years. Hood systems must be tested every six months. See [Sprinkler Maintenance](#) and [Standpipe Maintenance](#) forms to use to set up your own program.
- _____ c. Fire protection equipment/hydrants
No obstacles may be placed adjacent to fire protection/extinguishing equipment which could deter immediate access to it. Maintain a 3 foot clear space around hydrants.
- _____ d. Fire extinguishers
Any public assembly, educational, institutional or multi-unit residential occupancy is required to have a 2A10BC extinguisher within 7 feet of travel. A commercial kitchen is required to have a 40BC extinguisher.

- e. Smoke detectors are required

In the dwelling units of existing multi-unit residential occupancies, single station detectors should be mounted on the ceiling or wall at a point centrally located in the corridor or area giving access to each sleeping area. Where sleeping rooms are on an upper level, the detector shall be placed at the center of the ceiling directly above the stairway. Detectors shall also be installed in the basement of dwelling units having a stairway which opens from the basement into the dwelling. In hotel, lodging houses and congregate residences, detectors shall be located on the ceiling or wall of each sleeping room. In educational occupancies, smoke detectors shall be installed when required by the Building Code.

5. ELECTRICAL

- a. Abate electrical hazard

When electrical hazards are identified, electrical work performed to correct the hazard requires an electrical permit.

- b. Flexible wiring

Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be affixed to structures; extend through walls, ceilings, floors, under doors or floor coverings; or be subject to environmental damage.

- c. Temporary wiring for special events and holidays

Temporary wiring for electrical power and lighting is allowed for up to 90 days for Christmas decorative lighting, carnivals and similar purposes, and for experimental or developmental work.

- d. Extension cord

An extension cord may not be used as a substitute for permanent wiring; may only be used with a portable appliance; and must be maintained in good condition.

- e. Power taps

Power taps shall be of the polarized or grounded type, have overcurrent protection, and be listed. Taps shall be directly connected to a permanently installed receptacle and may not extend through walls, ceilings, floors, under doors, or be subject to environmental damage.

- f. Labeling

The access door into the ELECTRICAL ROOM shall be labeled and the disconnecting means for each service, feeder or branch circuit shall be marked unless its purpose is clearly evident.

- g. Maintain access

A minimum 30" wide by 78" high access to electrical panels shall be maintained.

6. GENERAL FIRE SAFETY

- a. Combustible storage below ceiling

Provide an 18 inch clearance below sprinkler heads. If there are no sprinklers, provide a 2 foot clearance beneath the ceiling.

- _____ b. Combustible storage in buildings
Combustible storage must be maintained in an orderly manner. It is not allowed in exits or exit enclosures; in boiler rooms, mechanical rooms or electrical rooms; or underneath buildings.
- _____ c. Combustible storage outside buildings
Combustible storage is not allowed within 10' of a property line (Exceptions: 1. 3 feet distance when storage is not over 6 feet in height; 2. when there is no hazard to the adjacent property.) It is also not allowed within 10 feet of a structure.
- _____ d. Dumpster clearance
Dumpsters and containers with an individual capacity of 1.5 cu. yds. or more shall not be stored in buildings or placed within 5 feet of combustible walls, openings, or roof eaves, except when protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system (may be off a domestic line) or when located within a storage area of Type I or II construction located 10 feet from structures.
- _____ e. Maintain clearance around heat-producing equipment
Clearance from combustible materials shall be maintained per Building and Mechanical Codes and product listings.
- _____ f. Maintain electrical motors, hoods, filters
Electric motors, filters on heating equipment, and grease hoods shall be maintained in a clean, safe operating condition. Clothes dryers must be maintained lint-free.
- _____ g. Combustible decorative material
Combustible decorative materials shall be maintained flame resistant.
- _____ h. Gas meters, regulators, piping
Protect when subject to vehicular damage.
- _____ i. Compressed gas cylinders
Cylinders must be secured and must be stored 10 feet away from combustible material.
- _____ j. Flammable liquid use
A quantity necessary for maintenance or running equipment may be kept on hand. Quantities exceeding 10 gallons must be stored in a liquid storage cabinet.

7. FIRE-RESISTIVE BARRIERS

- _____ a. Maintain fire-resistive construction
Required fire-resistive construction shall be maintained as specified in the building code, and shall be properly repaired, restored, or replaced when damaged, breached or improperly installed.
- _____ b. Maintain function of fire assemblies (i.e. fire doors, sliding or rolling doors, etc.)
Required fire assemblies shall be maintained. Fire assemblies shall bear an approved label or other identification and be repaired or replaced when damaged or improperly installed. Fire assemblies shall not be obstructed from their proper operation. Annual testing per manufacturer's instructions is required for rolling and sliding fire doors.

- _____ c. Occupancy separation is required
A fire-rated occupancy separation is required between any residential building and a garage.

8. EMERGENCY PLANS AND PROCEDURES

- _____ a. Emergency plan and training are required
Emergency plans, staff training and fire drills shall be provided. See [Emergency Plan and Information](#) policy and [High Hazard Occupancy Life Safety Occupancy FAQ's](#) for specifics.
- _____ b. Fire drills are required
Fire drills are required quarterly in public assemblies; monthly for schools and daycare except high schools which are only required to do them semi-annually; quarterly in multi-unit apartment buildings with onsite management; and quarterly in institutional facilities. The drills are for staff only, with the exception of schools and daycare.
- _____ c. Evacuation area must not obstruct access
For schools and daycare, the evacuation assembly areas must be located away from fire department access.
- _____ d. Fire department shall be notified
Notify the fire department before and after each drill when an alarm activation is planned as part of a fire drill (Call 858 974-9891).

Print Form