

Frequently Asked Questions - Fire Inspections

Fire Inspections

Do I need a fire inspection for home occupation?

No, you will agree to abide by restrictions on the use of the property - no client visits, retail sales, storage of regulated materials, etc. will be allowed without an occupational license. With an occupational license, the Health Department may require a fire inspection depending on your business.

Do I need to pass the required Fire Inspection in a commercial address in order to obtain an occupational license?

Not necessarily. If relatively minor code violations are found, you will get conditional approval, in most cases. Dangerous buildings, extreme hazards and non-conforming uses will not get conditional approval. Most occupancies will have 30 days to bring the building into compliance.

What if I fail the re-inspection?

If you are not actively bringing the building into compliance, you could lose your business license. The agreement you signed states that you will comply with fire codes. You could be subject to fines, summoned to court, and ultimately lose your license. In most cases, extra time is granted to finish the work.

What are the items most frequently found to be in violation?

Fire extinguishers are required in every business. They must have a current inspection sticker and be mounted in a visible location. Extinguishers are serviced by private businesses (you can find them in the phone book). **Exit signs** are required and if they are illuminated, the back-up batteries will be tested. **Emergency lights** will also be tested as well as the **door locks**. Doors that are designated exits must have "thumb twist" locks that can be operated without a key from the inside. **Electrical extension cords** cannot be used permanently, they must be replaced with power strips that feature a circuit breaker or an electrician must install wall outlets. **Exposed wiring** is a common problem as well as broken switch and plug covers. **Flammable liquids** can present storage problems if you have large quantities or the containers have been opened.

How do I obtain a fire inspection?

When you complete the first part of your application with Planning and Zoning, and are ready for an inspection you can contact the Prevention of Fire Bureau and the Fire Inspector will contact you to set up an appointment at your business.

Is there an annual inspection?

Yes, the Codes adopted by State of Georgia require that every business be inspected annually. In most cases, you will not be notified in advance of the inspection.

How are my insurance rates determined?

The insurance companies use a service that rates the fire protection in your area. They take into account the proximity to a fire station, the availability of water supplies, and type of construction of your home. Factors such as residential sprinklers, masonry construction and the capabilities of the Fire Department are considered among other things such as the presence of fire hazards close to your home. Brush, debris and wood piled next to your house will increase the hazards of fire. The Dept. of Forestry recommends that you keep combustible material and vegetation at least 30 ft. from your house.

What do I do if I need a fire inspection and do not live in unincorporated Hall County?

Each municipality is responsible for inspections in its cities and its policies may differ from Hall County's. Please contact your respective municipality for details.