

## What's on the Outside does Matter for Fire Inspections

What's on the outside doesn't really matter except when you are talking about fire inspections. An effective fire inspection should always include an examination of the exterior of the building. Important elements of fire safety are located outside of the building. These items must be inspected in order to ensure that the fire department can find, access and effectively fight a fire in the building. Some of the common deficiencies related to the exterior of buildings include: no address number posted on the building; building keys in the KNOX Box do not allow access to all parts of the building; fire lanes around the building are obstructed; and fire protection equipment such as fire hydrants, fire department connections (FDCs) or fire sprinkler control valves are obstructed.

There is a saying in the fire service "we can't help you if we can't find you". This saying emphasizes the importance proper address signage on your building. Section 505 of the Fire Code requires buildings to be provided with approved address identification. The address is required to be visible from the street front of the building. When it may be impractical to place or it would be difficult to view the address on the building, the address may be posted on a

monument located on the street front of the building.



Timely access to the building after hours is critical during an actual emergency. Timely fire department access to our buildings is the reason most of our buildings are equipped with KNOX key boxes. Maintaining an accurate inventory of keys that provide access to all parts of the building is vital to allowing the fire department easy access to the building or rooms during an emergency. Whenever locks or keys are changed the keys in the KNOX box are required to be changed.

During a fire emergency, effective fire department operations require that fire apparatus be able to get close enough to the building so that they can utilize their fire engines and trucks to control and extinguish the fire by deploying their fire hoses and ladders. Fire lanes are established throughout the campus in order to allow emergency vehicles access to buildings. The fire lanes must remain clear of any obstructions including parked vehicles.

The fire department also needs adequate access to fire protection equipment around your building. This equipment includes fire hydrants, (FDC) and fire protection control valves. If a fire does occur, the fire department will need to utilize fire hydrants so that they can be supplied with sufficient water to battle the fire. If your building is equipped with fire sprinklers and/or standpipes, then they will need to connect supply hoses to the FDC so that they can supply water to the sprinklers and standpipes. Fire protection equipment needs to be kept clear of obstructions including vegetation, bicycles, equipment or vehicles.



During your annual fire inspection, the fire inspectors will typically start their fire inspection with a walk around the exterior of the building so that they can note any deficiencies that might exist. Periodically, walking around the outside of your building inspecting key fire safety elements for your building will help to ensure that in the event of an emergency the fire department will be able to effectively respond to any emergency.

If you have any questions, please contact Martin Von Raesfeld, Fire Inspection Supervisor at [\(mvonraesfeld@stanford.edu\)](mailto:mvonraesfeld@stanford.edu) (650) 725-6933.

