

Familiarize Yourself with Common Fire and Life Safety Issues

I had the pleasure of attending this year's Annual Building Manager's Meeting and I thank everyone from Zone Management for putting on such a great event. One of the points raised during the presentations was "Familiarize yourself with common fire and life safety issues." With this in mind and for the next several months I will be discussing the most common deficiencies noted during annual fire and life safety inspections.



The Stanford University Fire Marshal's Office (SUFMO) and Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) are working on improving our annual fire inspection program. We will be working with both building and zone management to determine "pain" points and ways to reduce the number of re-inspections at your facilities. SUFMO looks forward to getting your input and making changes to "ease-the-pain" where we can. Some of the "new stuff" will include a pre-evaluation checklist that will list the most common deficiencies found during inspections and exploring written plans for clearing a deficiency.

The following categories are the most common areas with deficiencies which will be covered further in upcoming issues of "From the Ground Up":

- **Means of Egress:** Exit signs, corridors and exit doors all play a critical role in helping to ensure that occupants of your building can safely exit your building in the event of an emergency. Some of the common deficiencies noted include:
 - Storage in corridors.
 - Problems with exit signs.
 - Exit doors that are difficult to open.
- **Electrical Hazards:** Improper use of or damaged electrical wiring and equipment is consistently one of the top five causes of fires in the United States. Some of the common deficiencies noted include:
 - Improper use of extension cords.
 - Daisy-chaining power strips.
 - Obstructed electrical panels.
- **Fire Protection Equipment and Systems:** Fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems, fire sprinkler systems and other extinguishing systems need to be maintained properly and free from obstructions in order to ensure that they will operate properly when needed. Some of the common deficiencies noted include:
 - Extinguishers out of date.
 - Missing sprinkler escutcheon plates.
 - Obstructed fire alarm manual pull stations.



- **Fire and Smoke Protection Features:** The fire and smoke protection features of your building including fire-rated doors and walls. Fire and smoke protection features need to be maintained and tested in order to ensure that in the event of a fire they will help to contain fire and smoke which will help to allow occupants time to safely exit and limit the damage caused by fire. Some of the common deficiencies noted include:
 - Fire doors propped open.
 - Fire doors do not latch closed.
 - Damaged walls.
- **Storage, Use and Handling of Hazardous Materials:** Improper use handling and storage of hazardous materials including flammable liquids and gases pose both a fire and health hazard to the occupants of a building. Some of the common deficiencies noted include:
 - Incompatible materials stored together.
 - Compressed gas cylinders not secured.
 - Flammable liquid cabinet's doors do not self-close.

The annual fire and life safety inspection is a joint effort between SUFMO, building and zone management to work together to maintain a high level of fire and life safety. One of SUFMO's primary objectives of our fire inspection program is to increase awareness of fire safety issues so that they can be corrected quickly. Fire inspectors should always be considered a resource for you whenever questions or issues related to fire and life safety arise.

If you would like any issues that fall into any of the above listed categories discussed or have any additional question, please do not hesitate to contact me at mvonraesfeld@stanford.edu.

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