

New Fire Safety Requirements for Building Owners - FAQs

1. I am a building owner, but I am not proficient in the English language. How do I get the information in my language?

Go to the SFFD website's New Fire Safety Requirements for Building Owners webpage:
www.sf-fire.org/new-fire-safety-requirements-building-owners

On the right you will find the "Select Language" option. This will automatically translate most of the information found on the website.



If you need additional assistance, please call the SFFD Bureau of Fire Prevention at: (415) 558-3300.

2. Why is the Fire Department making me do all this?

The new requirements come from the legislation recently enacted by the SF Board of Supervisors for the safety of tenants of apartment buildings, for the protection of build owner's property, and to ensure complete transparency for all residents.

If you are a building owner and are feeling overwhelmed by these requirements, you may want to consider hiring additional help, such as a property management or other professional service.

3. I need help accessing a computer.

The Fire Department does not offer computer access assistance, however the SF Public Library has computers that can be reserved for use: www.sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000003001 Building owners can also ask a friend or family member for help.

4. I cannot find the documents on the webpage. How do I access them?

Click on red **SFFD HELP** links that are located on the webpage. The links will open a new webpage where there will be links to additional information, including the required and/or sample documents.

5. How do I get a paper copy of the new requirements?

The requirements on the SFFD website (www.sf-fire.org/new-fire-safety-requirements-building-owners) can be printed from a computer. The SF Public Library has computers that can be reserved for use where copies can be printed: www.sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000003001 Building owners can also ask a friend or family member for help printing and creating documents.

6. How else can I get a copy of the new requirements? Can I come in and pay for a copy?

Yes. Building owners can pick up a packet from the Bureau of Fire Prevention at SFFD Headquarters:

SFFD Bureau of Fire Prevention
698 Second Street, Room 109
San Francisco, CA 94107

Hours: 8am to 5pm; Monday - Friday

The Department charges 10 cents per page. The packet will cost \$4.50. Credit card or check please; no cash is accepted.

Please keep in mind that the packet includes just samples and guidance in many cases. In addition, the Fire Department will be providing updated information on the website, so you are advised to still check the website periodically.

7. Can you mail me a copy of all documents?

The Department can mail document packets upon request, but the requestor must include a self-addressed stamped envelope (apply 2 first-class mail postage stamps), and include the \$4.50 payment for the packet (check or money order made out to "SFFD"). Requests can be mailed to the address listed above (see #7 response). Requests received without fee or self-addressed stamped envelope will not be honored.

Please keep in mind that the packet includes just samples and guidance in many cases. In addition, the Fire Department will be providing updated information on the website, so you are advised to still check the website periodically.

8. Is there an informational video I can watch?

The Fire Department will be posting an informational video on the website in January 2017, aimed to assist building owners comply with the new requirements. Please look for it on our website at: www.sf-fire.org/new-fire-safety-requirements-building-owners

9. Will training classes be available to the public?

The SFFD Bureau of Fire Prevention is scheduling small classes for building owners, to help them better understand what they need to do to comply with the new requirements.

To register for a class, please call: (415) 558-3363.

Classes will be held at SFFD Headquarters located at 698 Second Street in San Francisco, at the corner of Second and Townsend Streets, one block from the Ball Park Muni Station (N-Judah and T-Third).

10. I received a letter from the Fire Department announcing these new requirements, but have only 1 or 2 residential units in my building. Are we exempt?

Most of the new requirements apply to buildings with 3 or more dwelling units; however the requirements for [Smoke Alarm Information Disclosure](#) apply to all owners of a dwelling unit in which one or more units is rented or leased, which means these requirements can apply to buildings with 1 or 2 dwelling units.

Building owners who received a letter from the Fire Department announcing the new requirements, and whose building has less than 3 residential units, still need to comply. The new Ordinances and resulting requirements are based on the number of residential units in the building property **as recorded in the City records**. Even if a unit is unoccupied, it is still legally recorded as a residential unit, and applicable requirements still apply. If you feel there may be an error in the way your building is recorded in the City records, please follow up with the SF Office of the Assessor-Recorder (www.sfassessor.org)

11. Do buildings that have multiple owners, such as condos, Tenants-in-Common, Home Owner Associations, Trusts, etc., exempt, or do we need to comply?

The new Ordinances and resulting requirements are based on the number of residential units in the building property as recorded in the City records; they are not based on the number of owners per building. Buildings with multiple owners still need to comply, and must have a designated primary building owner or entity, such as the one recorded in the SF Office of the Assessor-Recorder (www.sfassessor.org).

12. My building doesn't have a common area to post the required signs and documents. All residential units have separate entrances. How do I comply with these posting requirements?

If your building obviously does not have a common area to post the "[Posted Disclosure Information](#)", "[Annual Smoke Alarm Information Notice](#)", "[List of Tenant's Rights Organizations](#)", and the "[Statement of Compliance Form](#)" as they apply to your building, these documents shall be provided directly to the tenants, similar to what is required for the "[Tenant Fire Safety Disclosure Information](#)".

Building owners with buildings in this situation shall adjust the Resident's Statement letter for their tenants to identify the date that the resident received the "Tenant Fire Safety Disclosure Information", and include listing the "Annual Smoke Alarm Information Notice", "List of Tenant's Rights Organizations" and, if the building has an existing fire alarm system, the "Statement of Compliance Form". A sample letter is provided on the website: "[SAMPLE Resident's Statement – No Common Area for Posting](#)".

If you need to issue an [Owner's Statement](#) letter to any of your tenants, that letter will also need to be adjusted accordingly, listing all documents provided to your tenants.

13. I have my family members living in all my units. Is my building exempt, or am I still required to comply?

The new Ordinances and resulting requirements are based on the number of residential units in the building property as recorded in the City records; they are not based on who is occupying the units or whether the owner and/or owner's family members are building residents. Buildings whose residents are the building owners or owner's family members still need to comply.

14. Are buildings with units used for short-term rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) exempt?

The new Ordinances and resulting requirements are based on the number of residential units in the building property as recorded in the City records; they are not based on who is occupying the units or how long the tenant is staying. Buildings whose units are used for short-term rentals still need to comply. For more information on short-term rentals or to register, go to the SF Office of Short-Term Rental Registry (www.sf-planning.org/office-short-term-rental-registry-faqs).

15. Do these new requirements apply to residential High Rise buildings? If so, what is required in addition to what is already required of High Rise buildings?

Yes, the new requirements also apply to residential High Rise buildings. Some of the new requirements may be met in residential high rise buildings and apartment houses where Emergency Evacuation Signs are required. (See **SFFD Administrative Bulletin 2.11** posted on our website.) However, building owners are responsible for ensuring that their buildings comply with ALL new and existing requirements.

Information not included on existing Emergency Evacuation Signs still need to be provided on each floor in a common area, such as an elevator lobby.

16. Do state licensed residential occupancies need to comply with the new requirements?

No. The new Ordinances and resulting requirements are based on the number of residential units in the building property as recorded in the City records, which specifically apply to R-2 occupancies (Apartment Houses) and/or properties with one or more rented or leased dwelling units. They were not intended for other residential occupancies where additional regulations apply (R-1, R-2.1, R-3, R-3.1 or R-4 occupancies), such as assisted living, social rehabilitation, or residential nursing facilities.

17. Where can I get help to make sign floor plans and unit diagrams? Is there a list of vendors available?

If you need help customizing the required signs and diagrams to match your building's layout, you will need to find someone to help you, or you can hire a professional. Please keep in mind that information on the signs will need to be updated periodically, or when conditions change, so you won't want to make a big investment in these services.

Unfortunately, the Fire Department does not have a vendor list, and cannot recommend individuals businesses. However, you may use graphic computer programs available on-line, or find a copy service, custom sign or graphics business that could assist you.

18. Does an Architect have to make the floor plans and unit diagrams?

No. A licensed architect is not required; anyone can make them. However, the floor plans and unit diagrams still need to be accurate representations and comply with specifications listed on the **SFFD HELP** website page.

19. Can I copy the floor plan samples posted on the website and use them for my building?

No. The floor plans need to reflect the layout of your specific building, and must depict the actual floor layout for the associated floor where the safety information sign is posted. In addition, the **Posted Disclosure Information** has specific font size requirements, so the sign will therefore be larger than a normal sheet of paper. See that section on the website for more details, and additional printing requirements at: <http://sf-fire.org/printing-requirements-posted-information-signs-building-owners>

20. On the "Posted Disclosure Information" I have to provide fire extinguisher and fire escape service dates. How do I know what is required regarding my building's fire extinguishers and fire escapes?

Per the requirements in the San Francisco Housing Code, the SF Department of Building Inspection provides a maintenance checklist for property owners:

www.sfdbi.org/sites/default/files/Checklist%20English.pdf

The requirements specific to fire extinguishers and fire escapes are as follows:

MAINTAIN & RETAG FIRE EXTINGUISHERS: In all apartment houses and hotels a Type 2A 10BC or equivalent Fire Extinguisher is required on every floor of all public hallways. Required Fire Extinguishers must be serviced and retagged (Fire Marshal's Tag with service date) annually by a California licensed professional (this includes recently purchased fire extinguishers).

MAINTAIN FIRE ESCAPES: Check all fire escape ladders to ensure that they are fully operational (in particular the cable and all moving parts) and that drop ladders are not obstructed. You should have an industry professional inspect and service your fire escape annually. Property owners shall provide proof of compliance with Housing Code Section 604 by submitting an affidavit, with verification (if applicable) completed and signed by the licensed professional who inspected the subject building fire escape. Completed affidavits must be submitted to the Housing Inspection Services Division as indicated below, **every 5 years**.

Please send completed and signed affidavits to:

SFDBI Housing Inspection Services Division
Attn: Section 604 H.C. Affidavit Filing
1660 Mission Street, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103-2414

21. Do signs with "Building Contact Phone Number" need to be posted in the lobby or on outside door?

Signs must be visible from the outside of the building, and posted a maximum of 5 feet from the front entry door. Whether that means inside the lobby facing outward or on the building's exterior depends on your building. See **Building Contact Number Guidance** on the website for more details.

22. I have serious concerns about my phone number being posted publicly per the Building Contact Phone Number requirements. I do not want my phone number, or the phone number of any of my tenants, posted on the street. What other options do I have?

The intent of these requirements is to allow for prompt access to the building to conduct safety inspections, and to contact the responsible party in case of any immediate life safety issues. Building Contact Phone Number may be posted inside the building, as long as it is visible and legible from outside the building at the main entry.

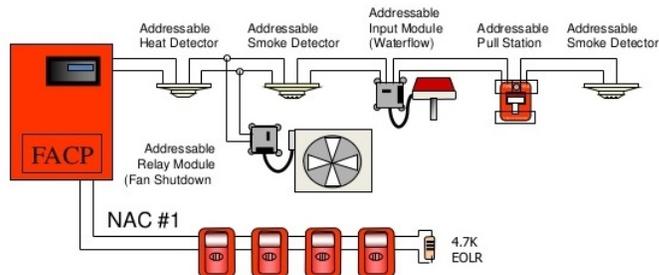
As an alternative, building owners may elect to have a separate phone dedicated specifically for building management issues, such as fire and housing inspections.

23. Can I use the sample letters you provided, and just remove the “sample” watermark from the letters?

No. You will need to customize the letters for your building address and tenants.

24. What is a fire alarm system?

A fire alarm system notifies occupants when a fire alarm pull station, smoke detector, fire sprinkler water flow sensor or other device has been activated. There is generally a fire alarm control panel (FACP) located in a common area or space that is accessible to fire alarm system technicians.



FIRE ALARM SYSTEM COMPONENTS

25. If my building doesn't have a fire alarm system, do I have to install a new fire alarm system to comply with the new requirements?

No. The new requirements are for the proper maintenance of existing fire alarm systems only. The installation of a new fire alarm system is not required as part of the new requirements.

26. Are owners of buildings without fire alarm systems still required to fill out the SFFD Statement of Compliance Form? If not, what do we do instead?

If your building does not have an existing fire alarm system, building owners are to submit a letter to the San Francisco Fire Department, stating you have no fire alarm system in the building. See sample letter on the [Statement of Compliance Form](#) webpage.

Letters are to be mailed to:

SFFD Bureau of Fire Prevention
Fire Safety Compliance
698 Second Street, Room 109
San Francisco, CA 94107

27. Are smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms required to be part of fire alarm system?

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms may be installed as stand-alone alarms, intended to notify tenants in the dwelling unit only. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms may also be wired to a building's fire alarm system. Whether the smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are stand-alone or part of a fire alarm system depends on the requirements at the time the building was built and/or renovated.

28. I just had my fire alarm serviced recently. Am I required to have it serviced again to complete the "SFFD Statement of Compliance Form"?

Contact your fire alarm service provider and have them complete the SFFD Statement of Compliance Form. They may need to perform additional inspections in order to complete the Form. Once the form is complete, submit it by the compliance date.

Once your fire alarm Statement of Compliance submittal is synchronized with the 2-year cycle, owners of buildings with 9 or more residential units need to resubmit the Form every ODD-numbered year, and those with 3 to 8 residential units every EVEN-numbered year.

29. What documents do I need to send to Fire Department?

Only the **Statement of Compliance Form** for buildings with existing fire alarm systems, or if applicable, a letter stating the building has no existing fire alarm system. If you received a letter from the Fire Department and your building has less than 3 residential units, you may also need to submit a letter too. All other required documentation shall be posted in building, provided to tenants and/or filed with the building records.

30. When are the fire alarm system "SFFD Statements of Compliance Forms" due?

For buildings with 9 or more residential units, forms need to be submitted to the Fire Department by January 31, 2017, and every other year after the initial filing date (every ODD-numbered year). For buildings with 3 to 8 residential unit, forms need to be submitted by January 31, 2018, and every other year after the initial filing date (every EVEN-numbered year).

31. The SF Department of Building Inspection provides lists of vendors and engineers for certain types of work. Does the Fire Department have a similar list? I need a list of vendors for computer access, graphic work, signs, fire alarm servicing, smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector installation, fire escape maintenance and fire extinguisher servicing.

The Fire Department does not have lists of recommended vendors. However, the Fire Department does recommend you talk to others about resources, ask for help from family, friends or tenants, and search the internet and telephone books for services.

32. Will I be required to schedule an inspection?

No. Scheduling an inspection is not required. Inspections will be conducted on a yearly basis by Fire Department Engine Companies for buildings with nine or more units, and periodically by SF Housing inspectors. All other apartment buildings will be inspected by the Department of Building Inspection - Housing Division only. However, complaints for Fire Code-related issues or potential violations will be referred to the Fire Department for ALL buildings, and violations will be issued for non-compliance per the Fire Code.

33. Can I schedule an inspection to make sure I have properly complied with the new requirements?

Pre-inspection are not being scheduled. Inspections will be conducted on a yearly basis by Fire Department Engine Companies for buildings with nine or more units. The rest will be inspected by the Department of Building Inspection – Housing Division. If conditions are found to be not in compliance with the new requirements at the time of inspection, the building owner will be notified of the specific conditions that are not in compliance.

34. What if I cannot get everything done on time?

Building owners are required to complete all requirements by the compliance dates. We cannot grant extensions. The Fire Department is mandated to issue Notice of Violations (NOV) on ALL fire code violations. If building owners do not comply, a NOV shall be issued with an order to abate within a maximum of 14 days of issuance. On a case-by-case basis, the SFFD hearing officer may grant time allowance to abate, to be extended up to an additional 16 days (not to exceed a maximum of 30 days from the issuance of NOV).

35. Is the letter not valid, because the San Francisco Fire Department is misspelled on top of the page?

Building owners are required to comply with the new requirements, regardless of the letter or any misspelled words. We apologize for the clerical error.

If you still have additional questions, please contact the SFFD Bureau of Fire Prevention at: (415) 558-3300.