Seattle Fire Department sfd CAM Client Assistance Memo 5971

Seattle Permits
—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Testing of Fire Protection Systems and Emergency Responder Radio Amplification Systems

Updated October 2019

Code Requirements

Fire protection systems (such as fire alarms, automatic sprinkler systems and standpipes) and emergency responder radio amplification systems (BDA/DAS) are among the most important components in any building for preserving lives, protecting property, and providing safety to first responders.

To ensure these systems are functional, the Fire Code requires the "responsible party" to maintain their systems in good working condition and to test their systems annually. According to the Fire Code, the "responsible party" is the building owner, building management company, or lease-designated person.

Fire protection systems testing — also called confidence testing — is performed by private sector contractors holding Seattle Fire Department (SFD) certification or, in the case of emergency responder radio amplification systems (BDA/DAS), by qualified personnel as specified in the Seattle Fire Code. These tests are separate from the regular building inspections conducted by the Seattle Fire Department firefighters.

Reports of testing and maintenance must be submitted to SFD via the department's third party vendor, The Compliance Engine. The company performing the testing and maintenance will submit reports on behalf of the building owner.

Testing Frequency

The responsible party, generally the building owner, must ensure that valid testing of a building's fire protection systems and emergency responder radio amplification systems (BDA/DAS) takes place within proper intervals.

The next page of this Client Assistance Memorandum has a chart showing the test intervals for each type of system. In addition, there are secondary tests and certain maintenance processes that must be performed periodically. The testing company you hire should be able to provide more information about these tests.

Certified Technicians Must Do the Testing and Maintenance

Only SFD-certified technicians are allowed to install, maintain, test, and repair fire protection systems within the City of Seattle. Emergency responder radio amplification systems (BDA/DAS) technicians are required to have specific qualifications (see section 510.6.4 of the Seattle Fire Code) and a Seattle Fire Prevention Division certification is not required. For more information on certification, review Administrative Rule 9.01 or call (206) 386-1351.

Tagging, Labelling and Reporting Requirements

After a fire protection system or emergency responder radio amplification system (BDA/DAS) is tested or repaired, the technician must update the service tag or label on the system to indicate its condition:

- Red labels/tags indicate that the system is impaired.
- Yellow labels/tags indicate that the system has deficiencies.
- White labels/tags indicate that the system operates as designed.

The design for labels and tags is prescribed in Administrative Rules 9.02 and 9.04.

The technician must also fill out a report showing:

•What tests and inspections were performed.

•Any deficiencies that were found.

•The technician's evaluation of the overall condition of the system (status).

The required reporting forms are available on the Seattle Fire Department's website: http://www.seattle.gov/fire/systemstesting

The Seattle Fire Code requires that the technician supply a copy of the report:

•To the responsible party on the premises—in paper or electronic copy. Reports must be maintained on the premises for a minimum of three years.

•To file at the testing company's office.

•To SFD via the department's third party vendor, thecomplianceengine.com. The testing company shall ensure that the annual test report is submitted to the third-party vendor's website within 7 calendar days of the annual test. Systems that are red tagged shall have their test report submitted by the end of the day of the test. Additional reporting requirements can be found in Administrative Rule 9.02 Inspection, Testing, Maintenance and Reporting Requirements for Fire Protection Systems and Emergency Responder Radio Amplification Systems.

Test reports that are submitted past the deadlines to Seattle Fire Department's third party vendor's website are subject to a $10 per test report late fee, and may also be cited as a violation of the fire code with a citation penalty amount of $373. The company performing the testing is responsible for late fees and citation penalties.

What To Do If Your System Is Not Working Properly

Repair

Any time a deficiency is noted in a fire protection system or emergency responder communications system, the responsible party is expected to have the damaged, failed, or defective part repaired or replaced in a timely manner.

Notify SFD

Some deficiencies (red tagged systems) are so significant that you must take additional steps. If a planned or emergency impairment is anticipated to take a system out of service for more than eight hours, the Seattle Fire Department must be notified. This notification allows the department to assess the risks and make any operational decisions necessary to ensure response-readiness and the safety of building occupants and fire fighters.

Table 1: Required Systems Tests and Frequency

System Type	Test Frequency
Fire Alarm	Annually (Optional: Quarterly for high-rise buildings)
Fire Pumps	Annually
Standpipe and/or Hose Cabinets	Five Years
Automatic Sprinklers	Annually
Emergency Generator	Annually
Smoke Control	Annually
Foam Systems	Annually and Five Years
Fire Escapes	Five Years
Alternative Automatic Fire Extinguishing System	Annually (6 months for dry chemical systems)
Commercial Cooking Rangehood Extinguishing System	Servicing required every six months
Emergency Responder Radio Amplification System (BDA/DAS)	Annually

For timelines and information on how to notify the Seattle Fire Department of impairments anticipated to last more than eight hours, refer to Administrative Rule 9.04 or visit our website: http://www.seattle.gov/fire/systemstesting.

Notify Other Parties

The insurance carrier, the alarm company, the building owner/manager, and/or any supervisors or tenants in the areas to be affected should also be notified of the impairment and provided with an estimate of how long the system(s) might be out-of-service. These same parties should be notified when the system is returned to service.

Selecting a Contractor for Testing and Repairs

The responsible party is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the testing and repairs are performed by a qualified individual. Work on fire protection systems must be performed by a contractor who holds the appropriate SFD certification. Work on BDA/DAS radio systems must be

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performed by a contractors who holds a Federal Communications Commission General Radio Telephone Operators License (FCC GROL) and manufacturer certification on the equipment. The Seattle Fire Department cannot make a specific recommendation about what testing company to use, but does provide a list of companies that employ certified technicians within the city: http://www.seattle.gov/fire/business-services/systems-testing.

To verify that a specific technician has current certifications for your type of fire protection system, call (206) 386-1351.

Compliance

The responsible party, generally the building owner, may receive a correction notice from a Seattle Fire Department inspector requiring testing, or requiring repairs to correct deficiencies. The correction notice will establish a date for compliance. If the Seattle Fire Department inspects again after the correction notice has been issued, and violations have not been corrected within the allotted timeline, the Seattle Fire Department may issue a citation in the amount of $373. In addition, the fire code provides other civil penalties and criminal penalties that can involve prosecution in court and fines of up to $1,000 a day.

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