

DOCUMENTATION GUIDE: FIRE/LIFE SAFETY

Introduction

The information on this web site is provided courtesy of the Engineering Services Section of the Minnesota Department of Health. Except as otherwise noted, the plans and forms shown are intended to serve as guides that healthcare facilities can use to help ensure compliance with applicable codes and standards and minimize the risk of being issued deficiencies (K-tags) during a federal life safety certification survey. While they were developed with the intent that they be modified, as appropriate, to reflect actual conditions and procedures at each facility, it's important that the facility's plans and forms include the information necessary to demonstrate full compliance with applicable codes and standards.

Applicable codes

In order to meet federal Medicare/Medicaid certification requirements, healthcare facilities must be in compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 101, *Life Safety Code*[®], 2000 edition. In order to meet state licensure requirements, healthcare facilities must be in compliance with the 2007 *Minnesota State Fire Code* (MSFC). Compliance with state licensure requirements is also a condition of federal Medicare/Medicaid certification.

NEW vs EXISTING for purposes of federal certification:

- Buildings/facilities constructed or for which plans were reviewed or a permit issued **prior to** March 11, 2003 are considered EXISTING buildings and must comply with NFPA 101(00) Chapter 19.
- Buildings/facilities constructed or for which plans were reviewed or a permit issued **on or after** March 11, 2003 are considered NEW and must comply with NFPA 101(00) Chapter 18 (this would include additions to and/or major renovations of existing buildings/facilities)

Documentation – the basics

Both NFPA 101(00) and the 2007 MSFC require that a fire safety and evacuation plan be prepared and maintained for healthcare occupancies. The codes expect that all employees will receive on-going training with respect to their duties under this plan. This is typically done through annual staff training and periodic fire drills. In addition, a plan must be in place detailing how a facility will handle situations in which the building fire sprinkler system and/or fire alarm system are out of service.

The codes also contain requirements relating to the flame resistance of drapes, curtains and decorations, the flame spread rating of interior finishes and, by reference to other NFPA standards, the testing, inspection and maintenance of fire protection systems.

In order to receive credit during a fire/life safety survey, it's not enough just to have the required plans. The plans must contain, at a minimum, all the information specified in the codes. Likewise, it's not enough to conduct the required drills, purchase approved furnishings and finishes, or perform required training, testing, inspection and maintenance. Everything must be properly documented – if it isn't documented, it didn't happen.

Every facility has its own method of organizing its documentation. At the 2008 Minnesota Health Care Engineers Association's Spring Seminar, the Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division's Health Care Section presented a suggested uniform format for maintaining required fire/life safety documentation.

The State Fire Marshal Division recommends that **all** documentation subject to review during a facility's annual fire/life safety survey be kept in a 3-ring binder tabbed and/or indexed to cover at least 17 major subject areas. It is recommended that the first tab include the following information about your building:

- Up-to-date 8½" x 11" floor plan drawings of all levels of the building
- Date(s) of construction of the original building and any subsequent additions
- Construction type(s) of the original building and any subsequent additions
- Number of stories for each type of construction listed

It is recommended that the 17 major subject areas be tabbed/indexed according to the following Table of Contents:

<u>TAB</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
1	Building information
2	Emergency Plan and In-service Records
3	Smoking Policy
4	Fire Drills
5	Systems Out of Service (Fire Watch)
6	Fire Alarm System/Automatic Dialer
7	Smoke Detector Sensitivity Testing
8	Battery-operated Smoke Alarm Testing
9	Fire Sprinkler System/Fire Pump
10	Kitchen Hood System
11	Portable Fire Extinguishers
12	Emergency Generator
13	Battery-operated Emergency Lights/EXIT Signs
14	Fire/Smoke Dampers
15	Interior Finishes/Decorations/Drapes & Curtains
16	Upholstered Furniture/Mattresses
17	Lab Procedures/Incidents

In addition to the convenience of having all your documentation in one place, using a uniform format has a couple of advantages. First, it can speed up the documentation review portion of your facility's annual fire/life safety survey. Secondly, if properly maintained, it reduces the likelihood of important documentation getting lost or misplaced, which can lead to a federal deficiency. *It's important that at least two people in your facility know where your fire safety records and documentation are kept, or that two copies be kept, each in a different and accessible location.*

For more information on the subjects covered on this web site contact...

- MDH Engineering Services (contact information can be found on the MDH Compliance Monitoring Division web site at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fpc/fpc.html), OR
- The State Fire Marshal Inspector assigned to your area (contact information can be found on the State Fire Marshal Division's web site at www.fire.state.mn.us).