



MISSOULA RURAL FIRE DISTRICT

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Fire and Life Safety: Self-Inspection Checklist

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:

- Is there a portable fire extinguisher mounted in your business?
- Is it readily accessible and visible to you?
- Have all fire extinguishers been inspected within the last twelve months?

EXTERIOR:

- Are address numbers for the building or your business space clearly visible from the street or driveway? All emergency vehicles (fire, police or ambulance) must be able to find your business. Numbers should be at least six inches high and contrast with their background. Larger numbers may be required.
- Is the area around your building free of trash or combustible debris? If a fire occurs outside the building, combustible material will just add fuel to the fire, allowing it to spread to the building.
- Is the trash dumpster for your business more than five feet from the building's exterior wall, roof overhang or any opening (like a door or window)? If the dumpster is too close and were to catch on fire, it would likely spread to the building.

ELECTRICAL:

- Are the electrical appliances and cords supplying power to them in good working condition? Frayed power cords and worn, or poorly maintained, electrical equipment will start a fire.
- Do all your electrical extension cords have a circuit breaker? Lightweight electrical extension cords are not allowed for use in commercial business. If you need an extension cord, use the type equipped with an internal circuit breaker (commonly referred to as a UL listed "power strip"). Do not use these extension cords or "power strips" for supplying power to large appliances such as refrigerators, copy machines, or microwave ovens.
- Is there a clear area in front of all electrical panels? A clear path 30" wide is required for access to the panel. There must be 36" of clearance in front of the panel, to a height of 78".

Fire and Life Safety: Self-Inspection Checklist (cont.)

ELECTRICAL (cont.):

- Is there a cover on all electrical switches, outlets and junction boxes? Missing covers are a common safety hazard and very inexpensive to correct.
- Are all circuit breakers within the panel identified? If you need to turn the power off to a certain part of your business, or piece of equipment, it is necessary to have the circuit breaker identified.

HEATING:

- Are the areas around the furnace and water heater clear of combustible materials? This is important when the furnace is located in the open area of your business and it is necessary to work around it. It still generates heat and may help start a fire.
- Have you had your furnace serviced in the last twelve months? Not only will the furnace work more efficiently, the cost of operation may be less. Remember to change the filters regularly.
- If you use a portable electric heater, consider this: Is it the style that will automatically shut off when tipped over? If you have to use a portable heater, it must be electric. If it will not shut off automatically when tipped over, it should be replaced with one that will. Kerosene heaters are not allowed for use in commercial businesses.
- When you use your portable electric heater, do you keep it away from combustible materials? Electric heaters will ignite combustibles in a very short amount of time. It usually happens when no one is in the room. Electric heaters should have a minimum of three feet of clearance in all directions.
- Is your portable heater plugged directly into a wall outlet? Do not use any kind of extension wiring for a portable electric heater (not even a power strip equipped with a circuit breaker).

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Is storage orderly and at least two feet below the ceiling in your storage area? While it is sometimes difficult, storage in the storeroom should be kept away from light fixtures, air supply, exhaust fans, and sprinkler heads.
- If you have a compressed gas cylinder within your business, is it secured so it cannot fall or be knocked over? Many businesses have compressed gas tanks that will sail away like a rocket if they tip over and the control valve breaks off.
- Do you know how to turn off the natural gas supply to your business? If the furnace malfunctions and there is a gas leak, you should know how to turn off the fuel supply in a hurry.
- Are there any holes or openings in your walls or ceiling? Sheet rock on walls and ceilings can create a fire barrier. However, these must remain intact, or repaired, in order to be effective.
- Does your business have a Lock Box (a key security box)? Are the keys current?

Fire and Life Safety: Self-Inspection Checklist (cont.)

EXITING:

- If the power goes out: can you, your employees, and your customers see well enough to get out of the building safely? It may be necessary to install emergency illumination that will work automatically when the power goes out. You should also have a working flashlight handy.
- Are all the doors used for exiting unlocked whenever you are open for business? All doors used for exiting purposes must be able to be opened without the use of a key anytime the building is occupied. This includes doors for the employees, as well as for the public. Thumb-turn latches and manually operated deadbolt locks are not allowed.
- Is there a clear aisle or passageway to all exit doors? Building occupants must be able to get to the exit doors without having to go around displays that are in the way. These areas must be free from obstructions to allow their use.
- Can you see the exit doors, or signs indicating their location, from everywhere within your occupancy? If it looks like an exit door, it must act like one. Identify the exit doors with signs having letters at least six inches high.
- Are the lighted exit signs in your business working? If you have lighted signs in your business, the light bulbs must be replaced whenever they burn out.
- Does every room constituting an assembly occupancy and not having fixed seats have the occupant load of the room posted in a conspicuous place near the main exit from the room? "Assembly occupancies" generally contain large numbers of people who are unfamiliar with the space, and therefore are subject to indecision regarding the best means of egress in an emergency.

ALARMS / SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS:

- Does your business have an alarm, sprinkler, and/or hood and duct system? These systems must be maintained and tested by authorized technicians. All testing results must be forwarded to the Missoula Rural Fire District.

If you have any questions related to any of the items on this "Self-Inspection Checklist," please feel free to contact Fire Marshal/Deputy Chief Christopherson, via one of the following methods:

Phone: 549-6172

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