

To: School Superintendents and Principals
From: State Fire Marshal's Office-Codes Enforcement Section
Date: July 21, 2016
Subject: Helpful Information for School Inspections

The State Fire Marshal's Office wants to help you prepare for your upcoming school inspection by offering the following useful information.

Fire Drills

Fire drills requiring full evacuation must be held at least once a month during the school year, with an additional fire drill to be conducted within the first thirty days of operation. TCA 68-102-137(b)

Records must be maintained of each drill and the date it was performed. It is preferable that it be kept in a binder with other required Fire Marshal documentation.

For example: If school is in session from August 15th to May 15th, the following 11 drills must be documented: August, Additional Drill by September 15th, September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May.

Fire Protection System Testing and Inspection Records

Annual inspection records for fire sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems and kitchen hood fire suppression systems should be readily available for review. A copy should be available in the main office of the school with other inspection documentation.

NOTE: If a fire alarm or fire sprinkler system is out of service or impaired, notify our office and your local fire department.

Means of Egress

- Keep means of egress (escape routes) clear and unobstructed.
- Doors or windows used to exit or escape the building must be readily operable and maintained free of all obstructions.
- No unapproved modifications can be made to classroom doors, corridor doors or exit doors.
- Unapproved security devices that restrict door operation are not allowed.
- Doors with closers may not be propped open.

Electrical

- Extension cords cannot be used as a substitute for permanent wiring.
- Power strips are permitted but cannot be plugged in to other power strips. Each power strip must have a dedicated electrical receptacle.
- Maintain clearance around all electrical panels.

Storage

- Storage must be not be within 24 inches of the ceiling if the building does not have a fire sprinkler system.
- Storage must be 18 inches below sprinkler deflectors in buildings with a fire sprinkler system.
- Combustible storage is not permitted in electrical equipment rooms or mechanical rooms.

Coverings on Walls and Ceilings

- 20% of a wall may be covered with artwork and teaching materials in a building without a fire sprinkler system.
- 50% of a wall may be covered in a building with a fire sprinkler system.
- No combustible materials are permitted to be attached to or hang from a ceiling.

Emergency Light Testing

- *Monthly Test:* Emergency lights and exit signs must be tested monthly with a minimum of 3 weeks and a maximum of 5 weeks between tests. Documentation of testing should include the testers name, the date, and any non-functioning devices and service dates.
- *Annual Test:* An annual 90 minute test is required annually. If an emergency light or exit sign is not fully operational after 90 minutes, the device must be serviced and documented.
- It is preferred that these test documents be maintained in a binder with the other inspection documents.

School Renovations or Changes

Before doing any renovations to the school, please contact your State Fire Marshal's Office inspector. It may be that plans must be submitted to the State Fire Marshal's office before the work can begin. We want to ensure that work is code compliant before money is spent on the work.

We hope your inspection goes smoothly and your school year is safe. We are here to help in any way I can. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your State Fire Marshal's Office inspector, or the supervisor for your region. Their contact information is:

Fire Safety Manager—Fred Garbler, 615-741-7190, fred.garbler@tn.gov

East TN Regional Supervisor—Mark Boyd, 865-594-6165, mark.boyd@tn.gov

Middle TN Regional Supervisor—George Smith, 615-604-4195, george.d.smith@tn.gov

West TN Regional Supervisor—Terry Singleton, 731-423-5703, terry.singleton@tn.gov