



DIVISION OF  
PERMITS AND INSPECTIONS  
Office of the Fire Marshal

# MEMORANDUM

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TO: Customers and Contractors

FROM: Becky Gander, Chief of Permitting

DATE: December 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Fire Process – Public Use

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## General Information

- Reviews and Inspections by the County - effective July 1, 2025
- Building permits (commercial or residential) that are applied for prior to July 1<sup>st</sup> or later, the county will handle the reviews and inspections unless it falls under the State Fire Marshal purview as stated in the MOU (see below)
- **State Fire Marshal's office will continue to do the plan review and inspections for the following permits:**
  - Educational Facilities K-12 only
    - College facilities will be done at the county level
  - New and existing CMS-certified health care and ambulatory health care facilities
    - Does not include: Doctor's offices for Meritus, Robinwood, etc., these are a county fire review
  - State-licensed day care facilities, as defined by the State Fire Prevention Code
  - New and existing state-owned properties
  - New and existing facilities and properties requiring a state license to operate
    - Does not include: Massage Parlors, Beauty Parlors, Nail Salons, Restaurants or Food Service Facilities including Mobile Food Units, these are a county fire review
  - All public fireworks displays, and consumer fireworks retail facilities and properties
- Sprinkler and Alarm permits should be applied for online except for those applicants who do not have the means or resources to do so.
- Paper applications are available for applicants who do not have access to apply online and can be obtained from the permitting website at <https://www.washco-md.net/document-repository/>

- Fees are in accordance with the fee schedule adopted by the county commissioners and a copy can be obtained online at <https://www.washco-md.net/permits-and-inspections/>
  - Fees are to be assessed whenever a fire review or inspection is necessary unless it falls within the guidelines of the Fee Waiver Policy.
  - When there is no square footage to assess for plan review, the Life Safety Miscellaneous fee of \$200 will apply
  - A fire review fee and initial inspection fee are to be charged on all fire permits unless noted otherwise below

## Sprinkler Permit

### **General Information**

- Sprinklers are not required for an addition if there are no sprinklers in the existing dwelling, unless the addition is to be used as a dwelling unit
- Building Permits will not be held up pending approval of the Sprinkler Permit

### **Permit**

- **Documents**
  - Make sure the sprinkler plans have been uploaded correctly.
  - Non-Residential plans must be sealed. A NICET stamp is sufficient. Does not need to be sealed by a licensed professional
  - Residential plans for apartments, condos and townhomes must be sealed
  - Residential plans for single family dwellings do not need to be sealed
  - Modular and Mobile Homes must have approval from the State of Maryland and upload a copy of the sprinkler system that was installed
- **Fees**
  - Sprinkler permits that are applied for at the same time as the building permit will only get charged the plan review fee.
  - If applied for after the building permit has been applied for, there will be a plan review fee, and an initial inspection fee charged
  - Sprinkler permits that are not associated with a building permit will get charged a Life Safety Miscellaneous fee and an initial inspection fee
  - Fees will be paid under the sprinkler permit
- **Professional**
  - All sprinkler permits must have a licensed sprinkler contractor associated with the permit. You can verify the license at:  
<https://mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal/Pages/SprinklerContractors.aspx>
- **Issuance**
  - Sprinkler permit can be issued ahead of the building permit

# Alarm Permit

## General Information

- Alarm Permits are for non-residential purposes and are required whenever a new alarm system is being installed or when repairs/modifications are being made to an existing system where neither scenario is associated with a building permit. The fire permits would be considered stand-alone permits.
- If the alarm plans are included with the non-residential building permit and revisions are required, the fire plans examiner will mark the building plans “revisions required” and a resubmittal will be required. A separate fire permit is not necessary.
- Alarm fire permits will also require an electrical permit for low voltage prior to issuance of the alarm permit.

## Permit Intake

- **Documents**
  - Make sure the alarm plans have been uploaded correctly.
  - Plans do not need to be sealed
- **Fees**
  - If included with the building plans – a plan review fee, alarm initial inspection fee and a life safety final fee will apply
  - If alarm permit is separate from the building permit – a plan review fee and alarm initial inspection fee will apply
  - Fees will be paid under the building permit if it includes the alarm plans otherwise, fees will be paid under the alarm permit
- **Professional**
  - All alarm permits must have a licensed contractor associated with the permit. It can either be a NICET license or a Washington County Master or Low Voltage Electrical License/Registration
  - For electrical license/registration, applicants must apply for that license in accordance with the Electrical Board Rules and Regulations.
- **Issuance**
  - Alarm permit can be issued ahead of the building permit

## Mobile Food Unit Permit

### General Information

- Inspection requests for a mobile food unit will require a fire permit prior to the inspection being completed
- A menu of the food that will be served is required as part of the permit submittal
- Does not require fire review and can be issued on the spot once the fees have been paid

### Permit Intake

- **Documents**
  - The only document needed for this permit is a menu of the food being served
- **Fees**
  - No plan review fee required
  - Mobile Food Unit fee of \$120 per unit to be charged. This includes the inspection fee.
- **Issuance**
  - Permit can be issued once fees have been paid

## Trade Permits

- **Mechanical Permit**
  - Stand-alone non-residential mechanical permits where the system is over 2000 CFM's will need to be routed for fire review. If the custom field is marked YES – mechanical drawings/specs will be required but do not have to be sealed
  - Permit will get routed for Fire Review and Mechanical Plan Review
  - Fees
    - Fire Plan Review – Life Safety Misc.
    - Fire Inspection – Life Safety Final
    - Fire fees are in addition to the mechanical permit fees
  - **Boilers**
    - Stand-alone non-residential permits for installation of a new boiler will be processed in the same manner as it currently is. A Fire Review is not required to issue the permit.
    - This will be inspected by the building inspector. If the inspector sees an issue while performing the inspection, they will let the Fire Plans Examiner know.
    - The Fire Plans Examiner, after discussing with the inspector will determine if a fire review and fee are applicable.
- **Plumbing Permit**
  - **Propane Tanks**
    - Permits for non-residential propane tanks will require a site plan showing the proposed location and should show distances from the tank to the structure(s) and property lines
    - Plumbing Plan Review is not required but is subject to field inspection

- Fire Review will be required for review of the site plan only which should include the size of the tank(s)
  - Fees:
    - Fire Plan Review – Storage Tank
    - Fire Inspection – Outside Storage
    - Fire fees are in addition to the plumbing permit fees
- **Electrical Permit**
  - Electrical permits are required whenever there are modifications to an existing alarm system, or a new alarm system is installed
  - Electrical permit cannot be issued prior to the alarm permit. They must be issued together
  - A Fire Review is not required on any electrical plans or electrical permit regardless of the scope of work.

## Inspections

- **General Information**
  - Inspections will be scheduled under the building permit when applicable
  - If there is no building permit required, the inspections will be scheduled under the Fire Permit
  - Inspections may be scheduled up to midnight for the next available business day
  - No same day inspections will be completed
  - All inspections are typically completed within 24 hours
  - Residential inspections will only include the sprinkler system and will typically be completed by the building inspector/fire inspector
  - Commercial inspections will include all life safety aspects of the fire code and will be completed by the Fire Inspector
  - Photographs are not permissible
  - All inspections will be completed in person by an inspector
  - Re-inspection fees will apply to scheduled inspections if the inspector finds the work is not ready upon arrival
    - 1<sup>st</sup> trip - \$50
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> trip - \$75
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> trip - \$100
  - Additional inspection fees will not be charged for inspections that require multiple trips
- **Hydro**
  - Insulation is not required to be in place before the hydro inspection
  - Photographs will not be permissible
  - Cold Weather Testing – Has to be a water pressure test in a heated structure
- **Insulation**
  - Tenting insulation must be complete at final inspection only
  - All insulation shall be in accordance with NFPA 13, 13D and 13R

## Miscellaneous Notes

- Building permits that require fire review but do not require alarm or sprinkler plans are to be charged the following fire fees:
  - Plan Review Fee (non-residential)
  - Life Safety Final Fee
- Building permits that require fire review and include alarm and/or sprinkler plans are to be charged the following fire fees:
  - Plan Review Fee (non-residential)
  - Alarm Non-Residential Inspection Fee and/or Sprinkler Non-Residential Fee
  - Life Safety Final Fee
- Sprinkler and/or Alarm Fire Permits are to be charged the following fire fees:
  - Plan Review Fee (residential or non-residential)
  - Alarm Non-Residential Fee
  - Sprinkler Residential or Non-Residential Fee
- Fire Pumps require a sprinkler and possibly an alarm permit
  - Fire Plans Examiner will determine if an alarm permit is required
- Kiosks – Valley Mall
  - Life Safety Final Fee of \$120 (RMU or tenant supplied)
  - This fee is in addition to the normal Z-Cert fee of \$165
- Code/Design
  - Minimum safety factor is 10% if static pressure is below 90 psi
  - As-builts are not required
  - Any changes to the approved set of plans will require a revision to the permit
  - 2024 NFPA 1 and 101 and referenced codes