



DIVISION OF
PERMITS AND INSPECTIONS
Office of the Fire Marshal

MEMORANDUM

TO: Customers and Contractors

FROM: Becky Gander, Chief of Permitting

DATE: December 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Fire Process – Public Use

General Information

- Reviews and Inspections by the County - effective July 1, 2025
- Building permits (commercial or residential) that are applied for prior to July 1st 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
 - 1st trip - \$50
 - 2nd trip - \$75
 - 3rd 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