

## Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner (L AFC) Inspection Basics

An L AFC must be knowledgeable in:

- i) The *BC Fire Code* and the relevant sections of the *Fire Services Act*,
- ii) The basics of conducting a BC Fire Code compliance inspection
- iii) The methods for the identification, assessment and control of fire and explosion hazards.

The L AFC must also have the ability to research information necessary (e.g., standards) to fulfil their obligations and/or be able to locate persons with the required knowledge. With this knowledge and ability, an L AFC can inspect/consult<sup>1</sup> on any fire or explosion hazard or issue using this checklist.

When L AFCs enter public buildings to consult or inspect with respect to protecting workers/occupants from fire and explosion hazards in the building, the intent is to adequately answer some basic questions, then, if appropriate, conduct a more detailed inquiry.

### Level 1 – Review the Fire Safety Plan, ensuring it addresses issues common to all occupancies

- 1) Is there a BC Fire Code compliant Fire Safety Plan (FSP) for the building? Is it current, i.e., has it been reviewed in the past 12 months? Has it been effectively implemented?

Review FSP for currency and completeness. Determine who conducted the review and if the knowledge, skill and experience of the reviewer(s) appear adequate to conduct a competent review.

- 2) Are life safety and fire threats common to all occupancies addressed?

This would include, but not limited to, the following:

- Exit doors and pathways, exit signage & lighting
- Functional alarms ,fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems; detection devices and sprinklers not obstructed;
- Common/obvious electrical and other fire hazards

- 3) Does the FSP identify regular inspection requirements for the detection and mitigation of identified fire/explosion hazards?
- 4) Are workers/occupants adequately supervised to ensure their work is performed without undue risk from a fire hazard?
- 5) Are workers/occupants adequately directed in the safe performance of their duties (e.g. verbal and written instructions, training, etc.) so as to not ignite a fire or explosion?

### Level 2 – Basic Site Visit

- 6) Determine if the FSP is being implemented as designed.
- 7) Determine that common life safety and fire threats have been identified and incorporated into the FSP.

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<sup>1</sup> Each municipality can define how it will meet its statutory duty “to provide for a regular system of inspection,” which could include alternate solutions like use of contractors or requiring property owners to supply a report certifying compliance, etc. This checklist may go beyond an individual municipality’s expectations of their L AFCs’ inspections.

## Level 3 – Detailed Site Visit<sup>2</sup>

- 8) Does it appear that all of the reasonably foreseeable fire and explosion hazards in this building or property have been identified?

During site visit, ascertain whether or not the plan adequately addresses the fire hazards identified in the FSP. Have some fire hazards been missed? The Guide to Fire Safety Planning (FSP) for Industrial Occupancies and OFC Information Bulletin, Fire Safety Planning for Buildings Containing Wood Dust Producing Operations, contain guidance on the types of fire hazards that may be present. The LAFC can also ask workers/occupants what fire or explosion hazards they believe exist and do they feel those hazards are being adequately addressed to prevent a fire or explosion.

To determine adequacy of fire/explosion hazard control, follow the systematic method of analysis (Questions #9 & #10) to determine if the occupants are adequately protected.

- 9) Has each identified fire or explosion hazard been properly assessed to determine if the hazard can be eliminated or are additional controls required?

There is a hierarchy of control options available to control risks or hazards:

- 1) Eliminate the hazard(s) e.g., eliminate the fuel, ignition source or oxygen source,

If elimination is not possible, then:

- 2) Substitute with something less hazardous, e.g., substitute solvent-based paint with water-based paint

And/or control the remaining hazard(s) by:

- 3) Institute engineering controls, e.g., building design & construction material, use & maintain a local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system to capture and discharge fugitive flammable vapours to atmosphere, combustible dust collection systems, bonding and grounding, explosion proof equipment, intrinsically safe electrical equipment – Refer to BC Building Code and BC Fire Code for acceptable solutions and National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) or similar standards

And

- 4) Develop written safe work procedures, to ensure the engineering controls are used effectively, and a preventative maintenance program, to ensure the controls continue to function as designed,

If engineering controls are not enough, then, consider:

- 5) Administrative controls, e.g., Hot Work Permit system, manual cleaning of combustible dust accumulation, labelling containers and storage spaces for flammable/combustible materials, effective training

And/or

- 6) The use of personal protective equipment and include in the safe work procedures.  
Note: The use of personal protective equipment is always the last option to consider.

- 10) Have the appropriate control measures been implemented for each hazard that could not be eliminated? This includes monitoring to ensure control measures remain effective, alarms to warn occupants when control measures fail, and that emergency procedures (e.g. alarm systems, fire and/or explosion suppression equipment, fire fighting response, evacuation, and appropriate first aid measures) exist.

The LAFC can help/direct the building owner or occupier to obtain the information (e.g. from consultants, or to refer to the BC Building and Fire Codes and appropriate standards, e.g., NFPA).

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<sup>2</sup> Level 3 is optional – may go beyond an individual municipality's expectations of their LAFCs' inspections and LAFC's training and experience.