

 	<p>Fire Safety Act</p> <p>PROCEDURES 1.0</p> <p>Revised: May 14, 2025 Created: December 18, 2024</p>
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Fire Safety Act: Regional district fire inspection and fire investigation procedures

Audience

These procedures are intended for the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC), fire service advisors, regional district staff (including fire services) and building owners and occupiers.

Background

These procedures:

- ▶ are specific to regional districts,
- ▶ support the Province's commitment to minimizing the loss of life, injury and damage to property from fire by administering and enforcing the Fire Safety Act,
- ▶ are consistent with current practice with OFC fire service advisors supporting local authorities¹ in conducting fire inspections and fire investigations, and
- ▶ address concerns from members of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) that, due to limited expertise, insufficient capacity and funding constraints, regional districts may need OFC support to conduct fire inspections of public buildings and fire investigations under the [Fire Safety Act](#).

The OFC will provide advice or perform fire inspections of public buildings and fire incident investigations as requested by regional districts².

¹ Under the Fire Safety Act, local authorities are defined as a municipality, regional district or any authority prescribed by regulation.

² Agreed upon by the Single Standard of Fire Safety Working Group (SSFSWG) and supported by the UBCM Executive, November 17, 2023.



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The OFC will continue to work with regional districts to explore other options for conducting fire inspections of public buildings and fire investigations in regional districts.

Rationale

The OFC supports regional districts with conducting fire inspections and fire investigations under the Fire Safety Act to ensure the following:

- ▶ **Consistency** – Fire service advisors are based regionally throughout the province. They regularly conduct fire inspections and fire investigations and are trained to applicable National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. Having fire service advisor support regional districts in conducting fire inspections and fire investigations helps support a consistent approach to fire safety throughout British Columbia.
- ▶ **Expertise** – Fire service advisors are trained in accordance with NFPA standards and are required to maintain and update their skills and knowledge through ongoing professional development. The skills of fire inspectors and fire investigators are perishable and therefore need to be used and maintained on a regular basis.
- ▶ **Capacity and resources** – Some regional districts have limited capacity or expertise, or insufficient funding to conduct fire inspections and fire investigations without OFC support.



Documentation and revisions

The OFC is developing a record management system to track and document regional districts' requests for assistance with fire inspections and fire investigations.

- ▶ Because regional districts are not defined as monitoring entities under the Fire Safety Act, any record-keeping decisions by a regional district with respect to fire inspections and fire investigations will be at the regional district's discretion and need only satisfy their internal procedural requirements.
- ▶ The OFC will meet with UBCM annually before April 1 to review the effectiveness of these procedures and to make amendments, as required, to reflect new information or processes.

Application

The OFC fire service advisors will support regional districts with fire inspections and fire investigations upon receiving a formal request that follows the agreed upon procedures.

- ▶ Some regional districts have the expertise, capacity and funding to conduct fire inspections and fire investigations within their jurisdictions, whereas others do not and may require support described in these procedures from the OFC.
- ▶ Regional districts will not incur financial costs for the services provided by the OFC under these procedures. This arrangement will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.



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Definitions

The following terms and definitions apply to these procedures only.

Local authority: The council of a municipality, the board of a regional district, and any authority prescribed by regulation, as defined in the Fire Safety Act.

Designated fire inspector: Any person, or class of persons, designated by a local authority as a fire inspector under the Fire Safety Act.

Designated fire investigator: Any person, or class of persons, designated by a local authority as a fire investigator under the Fire Safety Act.

Fire department: A department is established and operated as a local authority service responsible for the prevention or suppression of fires in a defined Fire Protection Area by a local authority, by a board, or by a commission of a registered society that is responsible for management or for conducting work or services through a service agreement, or the equivalent of any of the above.

Fire Protection Area: A geographically defined area that is determined by a local authority service establishment bylaw, a municipal service or a service agreement between the local authority for the fire department and the party benefiting from the fire protection service by means of an established service delivery agreement or the equivalent.

Occupier: Includes a tenant, lessee, agent and any other person who has the right of access to and control of premises, and in relation to common property and common facilities in a strata plan, the strata corporation within the meaning of the [Strata Property Act](#).



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Premises: Means a private dwelling, a public building, the parcel of land on which a private dwelling or public building is located, a motor vehicle within the meaning of the [Motor Vehicle Act](#), railway vehicle, aircraft, vessel or other means of transportation.

Private dwelling: Means a structure that is occupied as a private residence (if only part of a structure is occupied as a private residence, that part of the structure) or any other structure located on the parcel of land on which a private residence is located, except for a structure to which the public is ordinarily invited or permitted access, or that is used for commercial, industrial or institutional purposes.

Public building: Means the following: a building other than a building, or portion of a building that is a private dwelling or a structure to which the public is ordinarily invited or permitted access, or that is used for commercial, industrial or institutional purposes.



Procedures

Under the Fire Safety Act, local authorities are required to designate fire inspectors and fire investigators for their jurisdictions. Local authorities have until August 1, 2025 (one year after the Fire Safety Act came into force) to ensure that designated fire inspectors and designated fire investigators meet the established training standards. (**Note:** The OFC will provide training and training-related documents for these designated individuals to meet the new training standards.)

- ▶ A regional district designated fire inspector or fire investigator can request assistance from the OFC to conduct a fire inspection or fire investigation of a public building or premises.

The procedures for regional districts to request assistance are as follows:

1) Inspections

- a) A fire inspection may be requested or required in the following situations:
 - i. Changes in major occupancy and use of a public property or premises
 - ii. New public building being constructed
 - iii. Complaint received about a premises or a premises
 - iv. The owner or occupier of a public property or premises requests a fire inspection.
- b) The OFC fire service advisor fire inspection process for regional districts shall progress with the following steps:
 - i. The regional district determines the required action:



- a. If the required action is to request a Fire Safety Assessment, the forms will be completed by the building owner or the building owner's authorized agent, or
- b. If the required action is a physical inspection of the building or premises, the regional district assigns the required action to the designated fire inspector(s) within their jurisdiction.
- ii. If the regional district's designated fire inspector(s) is unavailable or requires support, the regional district representative initiates a request for support from the OFC by emailing OFC@gov.bc.ca with the following details:
 1. the address of inspectable premises,
 2. the reason for the fire inspection – the reason for the inspection will include a description of the incident or process that requires an inspection, a written description of the suspected fire safety issue(s) (if applicable), the name and contact information of the complainant (if applicable), an overview of previous fire safety compliance (if applicable), and any other pertinent details), and
 3. the identification and contact information of the owner and occupier of the premises.
- iii. The OFC assigns the task to the appropriate OFC fire service advisor. The fire service advisor will take reasonable action to contact the owner or occupier before entering the premises at a reasonable time and date.
- iv. The OFC fire service advisor performs the fire inspection.



- v. The OFC fire service advisor records the fire inspection information into the single fire safety standard tracking system (currently under development) and provides a copy of the fire inspection report to the regional district and the building owner or building owner's authorized agent.

2) Investigations:

- a) Fire investigations are required in the following situations:
 - i. All fire incidents (after the fire),
 - ii. Any fatalities due to a fire incident, and
 - iii. Any fires that significantly impact the community.
- b) The OFC fire service advisor fire investigation process for regional districts shall progress with the following steps:
 - i. As required under the Fire Safety Act, the building owner or occupier shall inform their local fire department or the fire commissioner (the OFC) of the fire incident.
 - a) If the information comes to OFC directly, the OFC informs the regional district of the incident within their jurisdiction.
 - ii. The regional district determines if their designated fire investigator(s) is able to conduct the investigation.
 - iii. The regional district must contact the on-call OFC fire service advisor to request support by calling the BC Emergency Co-ordination Centre (ECC) at 1-800-663-3456 in any of the following circumstances:



- a) If the regional district's designated fire investigator(s) is unavailable or is unable to begin the fire investigation within the legislated five days,
 - b) If a fatality occurred because of the fire, or
 - c) If the fire incident has significant impact within the community.
- iv. The caller provides the following details:
- 1. the address and location of the fire incident,
 - 2. the fire type (building, vehicle, outdoor, etc.),
 - 3. the status of fire suppression efforts, and
 - 4. any details of the fire provided by the local fire department
- v. The on-call fire service advisor will request support from the appropriate regional fire service advisor.
- vi. The assigned OFC fire service advisor attends the scene and investigates the fire incident.
- vii. The assigned OFC fire service advisor collects all required information and completes the appropriate Fire Inventory Reporting Evaluation System (FIRES) reports.
- (a) The fire chief, and any firefighters who were at the scene of the fire, will be available to the fire service advisor for the purposes of conducting interviews related to the fire investigation.
- viii. The OFC fire service advisor informs the regional district of the actions taken to support the regional district and provides to the regional district the fire investigation details that were recorded in FIRES.

— End of procedures —