

Your Fire Protection Contract – What's NOT Included



By Jere Riberdy, PEng

AS A CONDOMINIUM

manager, it is very important to know exactly what the inspection requirements of the Ontario Fire Code are and what exactly is included (and more importantly, excluded) from your fire inspection/service contract.

A typical scenario for setting up a fire protection contract includes asking various companies to prepare their quotations for the inspection, sometimes based on a generic scope of work listing inspection items that someone has copied from the Ontario Fire Code. Often the lowest priced contractor wins, and in these cases must walk a fine line between being the lowest price and still perform all of the inspection requirements listed in the Ontario Fire Code that are applicable to fire protection companies.

However, many items fall through the cracks. There are several items that fire protection companies cannot perform. Some of these inspection requirements need separate trades to perform them. Others are the responsibility of site staff or management acting on behalf of the owners.

Some examples:

Daily requirements – There are Ontario Fire Code inspection re-

quirements that must be performed daily, contractors are never contracted to come to a building every day due to cost implications.

Weekly requirements – There are Ontario Fire Code inspection requirements that must be performed weekly, contractors are rarely contracted to come every week, again due to cost implications.

Annual requirements – There are requirements that other trades must perform:

- Inspect fire dampers on HVAC systems (HVAC company)
- Inspect chimneys and flue pipes to be kept clean (boiler company)

- Operate disconnect switches for ventilation systems (HVAC or electrician) and other building specific inspection items....

The above examples are just a small sample of the inspection requirements that are typically not included in a fire protection inspection contract, and as a result are most likely not being performed.

■ Notice of Violation

The fire department now requires two years of daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual inspection records available immediately onsite upon their arrival. If

they do not find the records immediately available, they will issue a notice of violation requiring the records to be produced and reviewed.

As a manager, it is important to ensure you have the necessary documents onsite at all times, available to be produced immediately upon the fire department's arrival to avoid a notice of violation and potential fine for noncompliance.

For a detailed list of inspection requirements, consult the fire logbook for your building. Most logbooks list in entirety, the inspection requirements of the Ontario Fire Code.

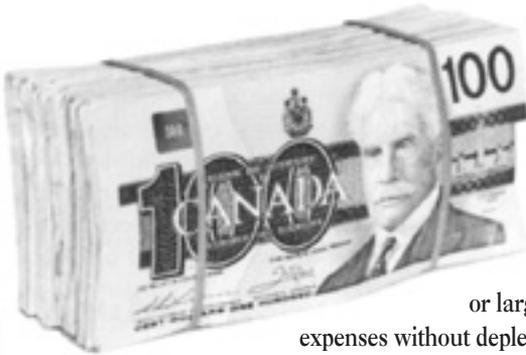
■ Helpful Suggestions

Three helpful suggestions are:

1) Many items in the fire logbook will not apply to every building, so for clarity we recommend striking out all items that do not apply, that way it will be clear that they are not to be performed, instead of appearing to be valid items that are simply being missed.

2) Another helpful suggestion is to colour code inspection requirements with a highlighter, one colour for the alarm contractor, one for site staff and one for other trades. This will help with training site staff on which items they are responsible for and need to be performing on a regular

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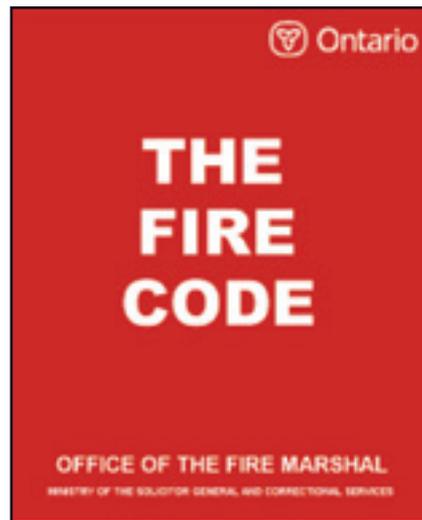


Know your annual requirements under the Fire Code.

basis, also any blank sections that were missed can be addressed by the responsible party.

3) The third suggestion is to arrange proper site staff training. To properly complete the daily, weekly, monthly and periodic inspections is a time-consuming and daunting task. Many sites choose to have site staff perform everything, others contract out the more difficult fire protection related inspection items to contractors. In either case, it's imperative to ensure site staff know how to properly perform the testing they are responsible for because not everything can be contracted out. Arrange a few hours of site training time with the site staff and your alarm contractor every year. Ask questions about any points that are not clear. If site staff are not comfortable or capable of performing the inspections properly, they will need to be contracted out to a fire protection company.

The Ontario Fire Code places all responsibility on the building owner to ensure the testing requirements are being met. As owners' represen-



The Ontario Fire Code has specific requirements that must be met.

tatives it's becoming increasingly important for condo managers to ensure that all fire code inspections are being completed to avoid costly fines and liability. ■

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