

Fire Prevention for Your Business

As a property owner, it is important to identify and control conditions that may increase the chance for fire damage. If unprepared, many businesses cannot reopen after a major loss. The following areas of fire protection should be evaluated.

Sprinkler systems

Your building may be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. When properly installed and maintained, this system provides 24-hour fire protection. Should a fire start, the system will activate and release a water spray in the area of the fire, suppressing it until the fire department arrives. Often, a sprinkler system totally extinguishes a fire. It is important that the system be professionally inspected on a regular basis.

Fire Extinguishers

It is important that your building has the right type, size and number of fire extinguishers. A call to your nearest fire protection equipment supplier or fire department will help ensure that you have the protection you need. A quality extinguisher will be either UL-listed or FM-approved.

Extinguishers are classified by the types of fires they extinguish. There are also clean agent fire extinguishers for protecting electronic items such as computers, telephone system equipment, and some mechanical equipment. The agent is clean, non-conductive and effective.

Fire extinguishers lose their charge over time and may become ineffective. A professional fire equipment supplier should periodically inspect the extinguishers to verify they are still operational.

Smoke detectors

Although smoke detectors don't put out fires, they do provide early warning that may allow escape from the building. Like fire extinguishers, detectors are also laboratory tested to ensure that they meet certain safety and performance standards.

For battery-operated units, test and replace the batteries on a regular basis.

Some detectors may be powered by the building's electrical system and may also have a back-up battery. These units should also be tested regularly.

Flammable Liquid Storage and Use

Businesses today often use a variety of flammable or combustible liquids, such as cleaners, solvents, adhesives, etc. Flammable liquids give off vapors that may travel with the natural airflow. These vapors may explode when ignited by a spark, such as a faulty electrical switch or a flame from a water heater pilot light.

Store flammable liquids in their original container or in a UL-listed safety can. Allow plenty of ventilation when using flammable liquids to reduce the risk of fire and injury or illness from breathing the vapors.

It is a good idea to limit the amount of flammable liquids stored on the property.