



YOUR SHREWSBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT

You already know your fire Department responds to calls for fire and medical emergencies, but some of the other functions a department does for its community are not as well known. Over the next several newsletter articles I will share with you some of the many ways your fire department works daily to ensure a safe and resilient community.

Every year the Shrewsbury Fire Department conducts over 400 commercial occupancy inspections. The purposes of these inspections include:

- Ensuring a safer working / living environment for employees, visitors, and residents.
- Business and job security. (Up to 80 percent of all small businesses that experience a large fire never reopen.)
- Gathering data about the building to guide firefighting and rescue efforts in case of an emergency incident.
- Educate our business community on the importance of fire and life safety.

Most occupancies are inspected on an annual basis. However, we have identified a number of locations as “Target Hazards” that are inspected up to three times each year. Target Hazards are buildings or complexes we have identified where to have the potential for significant loss of life or economic impact on the community. These include nursing homes, assisted living centers, schools, places of assembly, large industrial or manufacturing facilities, and locations identified as critical infrastructure.

Another term often used for occupancy inspections is code enforcement. The City of Shrewsbury has adopted the International Building Code, which sets the guidelines for fire and life safety in commercial and multi-family residential buildings. While code enforcement is the basis for fire prevention inspections our primary purpose is to ensure our residents, and visitors are safe when they shop, work, or do business in the city. Fire and life safety regulations vary based on the occupancy type, some of the areas we are inspecting in all buildings are:

- Proper fire suppression capabilities. Including fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems where required.
- Electrical hazards such as improper wiring, overloaded circuits, and proper installation of machinery and fixtures.
- Proper storage of flammable and other hazardous materials
- Appropriate and clearly identified building exits.

When our firefighters find hazards or code violations, we work with the occupant to correct the issue immediately if possible. If this is not possible we provide guidance to the occupant on what needs to be corrected, and schedule a time to come and re-inspect. If the business or facility requires additional technical assistance, we often work with our building and housing commissioner to ensure we provide further direction.

The inspection process is the very backbone of our fire prevention program. A fire prevention program is the most effective method of keeping the community safe from fires. Although firefighters and their fire engines can do amazing work to put out fires, the damage to the community begins before they even get the call. Fires devastate communities, costing billions of dollars, destroying vital infrastructure, and taking thousands of lives. Despite the nationwide fear of terrorism, fire is the greatest threat a community faces.

Office of the Fire Chief

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