

# 25 Most Common Fire/Life Safety Violations for Businesses

## International Fire Code (IFC)

Dear Business Owner,

We want to help you prevent fire hazards and ensure your business remains safe and compliant with fire regulations. The City of Sterling Heights Fire Department has provided a list of the 25 most common fire code violations. Reviewing this list can help you identify and address potential risks before our next inspection.

By taking these steps, you can reduce hazards and make sure your business is in full compliance with fire safety codes. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Fire Prevention Division  
City of Sterling Heights Fire Department  
Main Phone #: (586)446-2970  
Division Email: [fps@sterlingheights.gov](mailto:fps@sterlingheights.gov)



- 1) Addressing.** Numbers shall be provided for all new and existing buildings in such a position as to be plainly visible and legible from the street or road fronting the property. Numbers shall be a minimum of 4" high, with a contrasting background. (IFC 505.1)
- 2) Combustibles too Close to the Ceiling.** In buildings with sprinklers, combustibles are to be at least 18" from the ceiling. In buildings without sprinklers, the minimum distance to the ceiling is 24". Also, do not store combustibles under unprotected stairways. (IFC 315.3.1)
- 3) Combustibles too Close to Heat Producing Devices.** Keep combustibles a minimum of 30" from a propane or natural gas appliance and 18" from an electrical appliance. Keep combustibles at least six inches from baseboard heaters. Appliances include furnaces and water heaters, and portable heaters. (IFC 305.1)
- 4) Cooking Hood and Duct Cleaning.** Hoods, grease-removal devices, fans, ducts, and other appurtenances shall be cleaned at intervals necessary to prevent the accumulation of grease. Cleanings shall be recorded, and records shall state the extent, time, and date of cleaning. Records shall be kept on the premises. (IFC 609)
- 5) Cooking Hood and Duct Extinguishing System.** Dry chemical extinguishing systems shall be inspected and tested for proper operation at 6-month intervals. Clean agent systems shall be inspected and tested at 12-month intervals. (IFC 904)
- 6) Egress Means.** Combustible materials shall not be stored in exits or exit enclosures. (IFC 315.3.2)
- 7) Electrical Panels.** A working space of not less than 30" in width, 36" in depth, and 78" in height shall be provided in front of electrical service equipment. The working space shall not be less than the width of the panel. Cover holes in electrical panels with blank plastic covers. Do not place tape over circuit breakers (IFC 605.3). Electrical rooms shall be identified. (IFC 605.3.1)
- 8) Emergency Lights.** The bulb or bulbs must be lit when the test button is pushed. If the light(s) do not work, the battery may need to be replaced, or the unit replaced. (IFC 604.6)
- 9) Exit Signs.** All bulbs in exit signs need to function. Many exit signs are equipped with a battery back-up in case of loss of power. Push the test button on the side or bottom of the exit sign to check if the battery and D/C lights are operating. If not, the battery or unit may need to be replaced. (IFC 1025.2.6.1)

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**10) Extension Cords.** Extension cords are for temporary use only and are not to be used in lieu of permanent wiring. They may be used for up to 90 days or unplugged when not in use. Extension cords cannot pass through doorways, walls, floors, or ceilings, nor under floor coverings unless protected in conduit. Extension cords shall be used only with portable appliances and grounded. Extension cords shall show no signs of damage and not be plugged into each other. (IFC 604)

**11) Extinguishers.** Service must be performed annually by a licensed fire extinguisher contractor. Most businesses need a minimum 2A10BC (has a hose) size/type extinguisher for every 3,000 square feet. Occupants need to be within 75 feet of an extinguisher. Extinguishers need to be mounted three to five feet from the floor in a highly visible and accessible location. (IFC 906)

**12) Fire Alarm Systems.** A local (unmonitored) system needs to be serviced quarterly. A monitored system needs to be serviced annually. (IFC 907-8.5 and Chapter 10 of NFPA72)

**13) Fire-rated Doors.** These self-closing doors shall not be blocked open, obstructed, or inoperable. (IFC 703.2)

**14) Fire Sprinkler Systems.** These systems need annual servicing. A maintenance tag is required to be placed on the sprinkler system. Keep a clear access to the riser and do not store items within three feet of riser system. A sprinkler head cabinet needs to be mounted next to the riser, containing a sprinkler head wrench and a minimum of six spare sprinkler heads. (IFC 901, NFPA 25.5.4.1)

**15) Key Box.** If there is a key box (also known as a Knox Box) for your business, provide a working key. (IFC 506.1)

**16) Obstructed Exits.** Exit aisles for the public shall not be less than 36" in width. (IFC 1017.2 and 1028)

**17) Open Junction Boxes.** Open junction boxes and open-wiring splices shall be prohibited. Approved covers shall be provided for all switch and electrical outlet boxes. (IFC 605.6)

**18) Piggy-backed Surge Protectors.** Surge protectors (power taps) shall not be plugged into each other. They shall be UL certified equipped with over-current protection and must be plugged directly into an outlet. (IFC 605.4 and 605.4.2)

**19) Pressurized Cylinders.** Cylinders or tanks, whether empty or full, need to be chained/secured in such a way so they cannot tip over. (IFC 5303.5.3)

**20) Signage.** On doors to sprinkler riser room or to the fire alarm panel, place "Riser Room" or "FACP" (Fire Alarm Control Panel) sign on door, using a minimum of two-inch red letters. (IFC509.1)

**21) Sprinkler Heads.** There needs to be a minimum of 18" clearance around sprinkler heads. (IFC 315.3.1)

**22) Storage in Equipment/Electrical Rooms.** Combustible material shall not be stored in boiler rooms, mechanical rooms, elevator rooms, or electrical equipment rooms. (IFC 315.3.3)

**23) Typical Manual Bolt Locks.** Manually operated flush bolts or surface bolts are not permitted. (IFC1010.1.9.4)

**24) Unprotected Ceilings.** Keep ceiling tiles in place or replace when damaged. Fire and smoke spreads rapidly through holes or openings in ceilings. (IFC 703.1)

**25) Waste Accumulation.** Combustible waste material, creating a fire hazard, shall not be allowed to accumulate in buildings or structures or upon premises. (IFC 304.1)

The **City of Sterling Heights** has adopted the International Fire Code (**IFC**) To find the current edition of the adopted code, a list of Registered Service Providers, or a listing of our Protection Ordinances:

<https://www.sterlingheights.gov/481/Fire-Prevention-Division>.

•**Fire Alarm, Sprinkler Systems and Commercial Hood** Systems - Test and inspection records. All inspection and test reports shall be electronically transmitted to the fire department, within seven (7) days, through an electronic information data manager designated by the City to facilitate the collection and transmission of such reports. This is done through **IROL**: <https://inspectionreportsonline.net/>