

City of Chico Fire Department

Division of Community Risk Reduction

Frequently Asked Questions About The Business Inspection Program

What is the Business Inspection Program and why is it being implemented?

The Business Inspection Program is a program where Fire Department personnel will conduct inspections of local commercial buildings and businesses to ensure compliance with adopted fire prevention codes. The inspectors will also provide education and information to owners and employees about fire safety and prevention with the goal of reducing the overall fire risk faced by businesses and protecting the vital economic assets of our community. The Business Inspection Program will emphasize a proactive approach by identifying and correcting potential hazards before a fire loss occurs.

How will I know when an inspection is going to occur?

Business and/or building owners will be contacted in advance of an inspection either directly by phone or by mail/email. An inspection of the business will be scheduled at a time that is most convenient for the business and will minimize any disruption to business activities.

What can I do to prepare for an inspection?

Inspections are scheduled in advance to give the business owner the chance to “pre-inspect” their business prior to the Fire Inspector arriving. A “pre-inspection checklist” is available on our website for you to use to prepare. It is our hope that you will use this tool to identify and correct any common hazards prior to our arrival.

What will the inspector look for?

The inspection of your building will focus on four main topics: exiting and life safety, fire protection systems, building maintenance and general condition, and finally special fire hazards that may be specific to your type of business. Along with the inspection of the property, the Fire Inspector is also available to provide guidance or answer questions you may have concerning the safety of your business, employees, and customers.

What will happen if the Fire Inspector finds something wrong?

If a hazardous condition (code violation) is identified, the Fire Inspector will note it on a report and work with the business to determine a reasonable time to make corrections. Once all deficiencies have been corrected and verified, the inspector will issue a report showing that fire clearance is granted.

Will I be fined if there is a code violation?

The program is intended to be a proactive program to help you protect your business assets, staff, and customers from loss due to fire. We anticipate cooperation from business and building owners to correct any deficiencies identified during the inspection that create a potential hazard to their property in a timely manner. However, failure to correct a deficiency in the specified time does create a code violation and a citation could be issued. It is NOT our intent to routinely issue citations to businesses for code violations but rather reserve the citation process only for those rare occurrences where necessary, to achieve code compliance after all other avenues have been exhausted.

Will I have to pay a fee for the inspection?

Yes. In 2017 the Chico City Council approved the Fire and Life Safety fee to recover the costs associated with the Business Inspection program. The fee includes up to one hour of inspection time, administrative processing, and one “administrative review” of minor code violations which does not require an onsite re-inspection. The current fee for FY25-26 is \$186.00. If an onsite re-inspection is required, the actual time spent is billed at a 30 minute minimum at the current FY25-26 rate of \$93.00 per half hour for actual time spent.

How often will my business be inspected?

Unlike facilities which conduct hazardous operations and are required to have a permit to operate issued annually by the Fire Department, typically most business inspections are conducted once every 3 years. During the Business Inspection, a formal inspection schedule will be developed to make sure the inspection frequency is adequate to identify and control hazards without over burdening the business community.