



ASK YOUR FIRE DEPARTMENT...

Battalion Chief Frank Giuliano

QUESTION *Posted: 06-25-2008 From Ed Shuttleworth*

I am the president of the Bermuda Links condo association here in Bonita Fairways. I have a question regarding our sprinkler alarm system and do not know who to contact. We have been told that our alarm panels require a yearly UL inspection in addition to all its other inspection requirements. I find this strange and when I called UL they knew nothing about it. What do you know about this requirement or do you know who I can call to find out.

PS. the current UL certification in the box says it expires in 2013.

Thanks for your help.

ANSWER

Ed

I can understand your frustration for not getting a clear answer regarding inspections of your building's fire protection systems. The type of residential building you and your neighbors live in have three separate or different types of built-in fire protection/detection systems. Your three systems are fire sprinklers, a fire alarm system, and smoke alarms. In order to answer your questions, I have provided a link to our web site that has additional information for each fire protection system with regards to inspection and testing frequency. [***Inspections...***](#)

Fire Sprinklers

The fire sprinkler system in your building was designed in accordance with National Fire Protection Association Standard for fire sprinklers, and installation was inspected by the fire department during construction. After the final acceptance test, the sprinkler system needs to be inspected and tested periodically. The frequency of inspections can be monthly, quarterly, and annually in some cases. Under Florida Law only a licensed Fire Protection Contractor I or II is able to perform inspections on fire sprinkler systems.

Fire Alarm System

There are only two reasons why your building would have a fire alarm control panel (FACP). If a building is three or more stories in height, or has more than 11 dwelling units, a fire alarm system is required. This type of building would have a notification speaker(s) within each dwelling unit, and horn/strobes and manual pull stations on the exterior of the building. The second reason for a fire alarm control panel is that it is required by the Florida Building Code. The code requires fire sprinkler systems to be supervised electronically. This means monitoring the integrity of control valves in the ON position, and flow switches for water flow. In Lee County, all fire alarm control panels installed only for monitoring fire sprinkler systems are required to be "Central

Station Service". The National Fire Alarm Code requires a Central Station Service to be either placarded or certificated by a listed testing laboratory; i.e. Factory Mutual, UL. In your case, the installing fire alarm company used Underwriters Laboratories (UL) for the certificate on your FACP. Also, under Florida Law only licensed Fire Alarm Contractors can inspect, test and or repair fire alarm systems. The UL Certificate you mentioned for your building is good until the year 2013, and would not be a separate inspection required by code. The fire code does require your fire alarm system to be inspected and tested annually.

Smoke Alarms

These are the single-station smoke alarms found throughout your home. These smoke alarms are located in every sleeping room, and immediate vicinity of sleeping areas. The smoke alarms are wired into the home's electrical system, and include battery back-up in case of power outages. The smoke alarms are interconnected to each other within your home, and all work together when one detects smoke. The smoke alarms within your home are not connected to the building's fire alarm system, so you need to dial 911 if there is a fire within your home. The testing and maintenance for these smoke alarms are you and your neighbor's responsibility. As a rule, we recommend "Change your Clocks, Change your Batteries" to remind homeowners to change their smoke alarm batteries twice a year.

Ed, thank you for your question, and I hope I was helpful to you. If you have any more questions or need additional help with your fire alarm, sprinklers, inspections, or codes, please contact our Fire Prevention Division at 239-949-6212.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.