



Westchester Fire Department

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James C. Adams

Fire Chief

Village Ordinance# 15-2115 - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why were the Village ordinances changed to the 2012 International Building and Fire Codes?

A: Model building and fire codes are reviewed every few years, the model codes reflect changes in technology, construction characteristics and prove best practices when relating to efficiency, and safety. The Village of Westchester's best interests are to promote the most current requirements to provide for the safety of its residents, businesses and visitors. These code changes reflect the best opportunity to provide for a safer and more valuable community. These changes although carry a burden of cost, are in the best interest of the Village.

Q: I received a letter from the Fire Department stating that my building requires an automatic sprinkler system or a fire alarm system. Why was my building selected?

A: Your building was selected based upon the model building and fire codes which may be viewed by clicking the following link: <http://westchester-il.org/index.aspx?nid=112> . The size and type of occupancy you own requires by code those improvements. It has been proven over time that automatic sprinkler systems and fire detection and notification significantly reduce the loss of life and dollar value losses due to fire. Westchester takes the safety of all who reside and do business within our community as a priority.

Q: How do I begin the process of making the required improvements to my property?

A: By receiving the letter it directs you as to what systems are required. Some may only require a fire alarm system; others may require both automatic fire sprinklers and a fire alarm system. If you are required to install an automatic fire sprinkler system, code requires that the sprinkler system is connected to a fire alarm system, so that if the system activates it automatically transmits a local alarm to the occupants, as well as immediately notifies the Westchester Fire Department to respond. This automatic notification saves lives.

With either type of system, you first need to contact a fire protection contractor. The Village of Westchester Department of Community Development has published a current list of licensed contractors capable of completing your required project which can be found at: <http://il-westchester.civicplus.com/index.aspx?NID=111> . Click the link for REGISTERED CONTRACTORS. You may also seek out your own contractors, but be aware that they must file for a license to operate within the Village of Westchester and must meet minimum requirements set forth by the various building and fire codes as companies who are certified to design and install fire protection systems. When contacting a vendor, please make sure they are capable, and are bonded and insured.

Once you select a vendor, the vendor will be able to discuss with you the specific type of system and the required devices or improvements that will be required for compliance. Capable vendors are well versed in the International Fire Code (IFC), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and National Electric Code (NEC) requirements. To be specific the adopted fire codes reference the following model national fire codes: IFC 2012, NFPA 101, NFPA 13, NFPA 72 and 2011 NEC. The vendor will complete a proposal based upon the code requirements and submit pricing for your consideration.

Q: Before I chose a contractor, what are the basic requirements needed for a fire alarm system?

A: **Existing multi-family occupancies requiring a Fire Alarm only;** code provides for required coverage in the common areas of the building. This would include vestibules, hallways, storage areas, common laundry areas. Any area not considered the residence. The system will require at a minimum, hard wired smoke detectors, addressable fire alarm control panel, interior audio-visual notification devices, pull stations at each exit, exit and emergency lighting for the exits, a Knox box rapid entry system, exterior visual notification device and a wireless transmitter for the fire alarm signal. The wireless transmitter is proprietary to SMG Security, who provides the transmitter, and the required monitoring. Monitoring is how the Westchester Fire Department automatically receives the fire alarm and will automatically respond to activation. All Fire alarms must transmit to the Village of Westchester. No other monitoring company may be used.

Existing commercial properties 4,999 square feet or less, that do NOT have a basement; the minimum requirement is for 100% coverage for automatic fire protection without an automatic sprinkler system. **Existing buildings greater than 4,999 square feet and/or that have a basement;** are required to install both an automatic fire protection system and automatic fire sprinkler system. (See FAQ on Sprinkler systems below) The requirements remain the same for an addressable fire alarm control panel, interior and exterior notification devices, emergency exit lighting, Knox Box entry system and monitoring.

Your contractor is required to obtain a permit to install the system from the Building Department, and will be required to submit cut sheets, and fire alarm plans drawn to scale for review, prior to the work starting. Once approved, the installation must occur exactly to the plans approved and must be inspected and verified by the Westchester Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau. All work must be completed no later than April 27, 2017.

Q: Before I choose a fire sprinkler contractor what are the basic requirements?

A: If your existing building is larger than 4,999 square feet, you are required to install a fire sprinkler system that will provide 100% coverage. The code also requires that any sprinkler system must be monitored by an approved fire alarm system. The requirements for smoke detection is less for a fully sprinklered building, the other requirements stated above still pertain to this required system.

Your contractor is required to obtain a permit to install the system from the Building Department, and will be required to submit cut sheets, and fire sprinkler plans drawn to scale for review, prior to the work starting. Once approved, the installation must occur exactly to the plans

approved and must be inspected and verified by the Westchester Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau. All work must be completed no later than April 27, 2017.

Q: What are the anticipated costs of these systems to install?

A: The Village of Westchester does not quote pricing, but industry sources consistently state that a good estimated cost for an automatic fire protection system would be \$2-\$5 per square foot, plus monthly monitoring charges. Contact SMG security for monitoring pricing. 847-593-0999.

For Automatic fire sprinkler systems, you could estimate between \$5-\$10 per square foot to install in an existing building. Please check with your insurance providers, as the installation of automatic fire suppression systems may save you up to 60% on you premiums.

Q: What if I feel my building is not required, or already meets the requirements set forth by the Village? What if I have specific questions regarding this directive? How are those addressed?

A: As directed in the initial letter you received, If you believe your property does not meet the minimum requirements set forth in the adopted code or you believe your property currently meets or exceeds the adopted code, you may send any/all correspondence and documentation to: Westchester Fire Department, *ATTENTION: Fire Prevention Bureau*, 10240 W. Roosevelt Rd., Westchester, Il. 60154, *no later than JULY 31st, 2015*. No specific inquiries to you property will be answered by phone.

Q: What if I choose to ignore this directive?

A: The Village, through the approved ordinance, has the right to cite you for violations beginning on April 28, 2017. The citation can include a fine of up to \$750.00 per day, per violation of the codes adopted. If continual means to gain compliance are ignored, administrative adjudication may occur which could revoke the occupancy status and render vacancy until compliance is gained. It would be in your best interest to immediately research the costs and time involved to update your property to the relevant code requirements.