



April 3, 2020

AN OPEN LETTER

COUNCIL OF CANADIAN FIRE MARSHALS & FIRE COMMISSIONERS

The Institution of Fire Engineers has a long tradition of proudly representing its over 10,000 international membership and the Canadian branch has been recognized as a key partner in public safety, furthering our mission of *promoting the safest possible Canada through progressive professional collaboration between fire engineering practitioners.*

Fire Departments, building owners, engineers, and fire safety service providers have been deemed as essential services. All are continuing to lead their respective industries in delivering professional services and expertise throughout the community in response to COVID-19.

I am reaching out to you on behalf of the Institution of Fire Engineers - Canada Branch, to provide guidance and recommendations for both our membership and industry leaders, in the interest of public safety in Canada, by ensuring fire inspections and testing procedures are maintained as we manage with COVID-19.

The Institution of Fire Engineers is a non-profit, professional body with a global reach that extends through 42 international branches and has a membership of over 10,000 professionals worldwide. In Canada, we remain active in uniting and supporting both Fire Services, Fire Protection and Fire Engineering professionals and building owner associations.

It is in the spirit of our mission that we communicate the following industry response and guidelines:

**Annual Building Fire Safety Inspections CAN/ULC-S536**

Test and inspection service providers have been deemed as essential services across Canada. It is understood that fire protection test and inspection technicians, while onsite, will have limited contact with building staff and occupants, and typically operate via a two-way radio. Service personnel should follow Public Health social distancing requirements within their area of jurisdiction, employer health and safety requirements, and any special procedures enacted at the building they are providing service in.

Given that CAN/ULC-536 has provisions for devices “not reasonably accessible,”(such as inside residential suites and inside tenant spaces for commercial and retail buildings) to be tested every 2 years, it is requested that clarification is provided by each provincial AHJ so that both building owners and professional service providers have a clear direction in the interest of public safety. These systems are not only protecting building occupants, but the safety of operational emergency services who rely upon this equipment during building emergencies.

**Fire Drills**

National, Provincial and Territorial Fire Codes across the country have requirements to ensure the safety of all Canadians with respect to building fire drills. In the interest of public safety, it should be

considered that owners and managers of buildings delay or postpone evacuation drills involving building occupants to further protect the public.

It is recommended that all building supervisory staff responsible for any occupancy type building, review their own roles and responsibilities outlined in your building's approved fire safety plan, and document this review as part of your ongoing fire safety program.

### **Residential Highrise Building Fire Alarms & Evacuations**

Building owners and managers of high-rise residential buildings are encouraged to remind both staff and occupants on their roles, responsibilities and emergency procedures under the building's Fire Safety Plan. This can be completed by sharing the applicable pages of your building's fire safety plan with both staff and residents. In the event of an emergency, occupants under self quarantine are to at all times, follow the building's approved emergency procedures outlined in the building's fire safety plan. During building evacuations, social distancing in hallways, stairwells and once outside the building should be adhered to.

### **Long Term Care Homes, Hospitals, Temporary Hospitals / Shelters in Canada**

Due to the COVID-19 response and impacts on these facilities, it is recommended that the basic fire safety requirements exist for building owners and remain a priority in order to protect our most vulnerable across the country.

These facilities are required to maintain fully operational fire and life safety systems required by the National/Provincial Fire Codes. This includes adhering to test, inspection and maintenance schedules as required.

### **Building Fire Pumps**

National, Provincial and Territorial Fire Codes across the country have requirements to ensure that critical components of fire protection systems are maintained, such as sprinkler and standpipe pumps. These fire pumps are a vital tool in building safety and the test, maintenance and inspection requirements remain in place.

### **Emergency Power in Buildings**

Emergency Power and Lighting systems in all occupied buildings in Canada must also be maintained as required. These systems provide vital protection to building occupants and ensure that the fire protection systems will function when needed.

The provinces and territories have enacted their respective Emergency Acts due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Canadian citizens have been asked to remain in their homes to prevent further spread of COVID-19. Given this situation, there may be an increased potential for fires in residences. Respectfully, we must maintain Fire Code compliance to ensure fire and life safety for all Canadians and would encourage the message be communicated across the country.

On behalf of the membership and our industry partners, we extend our sincere thanks to all front line staff and essential services doing their part.

Sincerely,



Phillip Bott GFireE, CFSI  
President

Institution of Fire Engineers – Canada Branch  
[www.ife.ca](http://www.ife.ca)