

Fort Bend County Fire Code Fifth Edition



Fort Bend County Fire Marshal's Office
Fort Bend County Fire Marshal: Mark Flathouse

Adopted: __June 24, 2014____

Effective: __August 1, 2014____

Amended: __August 25, 2015____

Amended: __September 13, 2016__

Amended: __June 27, 2017____

Amended: __September 3, 2019____

PREFACE

Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 233, Section 233.061 authorizes certain counties to adopt a Fire Code and the regulations necessary to administer and enforce the Fire Code. As the governing body of Fort Bend County, Texas, the Commissioners Court finds that adopting a Fire Code and requiring permits for the construction of commercial establishments, public buildings and multi-family residences in the unincorporated areas of Fort Bend County will protect the health, safety and welfare of life and property of the general public. The Fire Code requires periodic inspection of new and existing structures to ensure safety standards are being maintained for the continued practice of life safety and property conservation.

FORT BEND COUNTY FIRE CODE

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EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT A: Additions, Insertions, Deletions, and Changes to International Fire Code, **2018** Edition

EXHIBIT B: Fee Schedule

1.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 1.1 Purpose:** The purpose of the Fort Bend County Fire Code is the safe-guarding of life and property from fire and explosion hazards arising from the storage, handling and use of hazardous substances, materials and devices, and from conditions hazardous to life or property in the occupancy of buildings and premises in Fort Bend County.
- A. The Fort Bend County Fire Code is intended to provide minimum requirements for fire safety, with due regard to function, for the Design and Construction or Substantial Improvements to any Public Buildings, Commercial Establishments, and Multi-Family Dwellings with four or more units, as determined by the current property designation identified by the Fort Bend County Tax Appraisal District.
 - B. The Fort Bend County Fire Code is not intended to be a building code as described in the Texas Local Government Code Chapter 214 and does not evaluate structural, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical suitability, unless it is directly related to fire safety.
 - C. The Fort Bend County Fire Code is not intended in any way to limit the statutory authority of the Fire Marshal, and it is intended that such authority be retained to the fullest extent that the law would authorize.
- 1.2 Authority:** The Fort Bend County Fire Code is adopted by the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court pursuant to Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 233, Section 233.061 which authorizes certain counties to adopt a Fire Code and the regulations necessary to administer and enforce the Fire Code.

2.0 ADOPTION AND ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1** Except for the deletions and changes identified in Appendix A, Fort Bend County hereby adopts the **International Fire Code 2018** edition (hereinafter known as "IFC"), as the Fort Bend County Fire Code. A complete copy of the IFC is on file in the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal's Office.
- 2.2** The Fort Bend County Fire Marshal is responsible for the administration of this Fire Code, issuance of permits required by this Fire Code, enforcement of this Fire Code and maintenance of proper records.
- 2.3** The County Fire Marshal or the County Fire Marshal's designee may conduct inspections provided for in this Fire Code or by Subchapter C of Chapter 233 of Subtitle B of Title 7 of the Texas Local Government Code.
- 2.4** Below shall identify the scope of Fort Bend County Fire Code:
- A. The Fort Bend County Fire Code shall apply to all new construction or substantial improvement of all Public Buildings, Commercial Establishments, and Multi-Family Dwellings with four or more units, as determined by the current property designation identified by the Fort Bend County Tax Appraisal District.
 - B. The Fort Bend County Fire Code does not apply to any industrial facility that the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal determines qualifies for the exception specified in Section

- 233.062(b) of the Texas Local Government Code. The Fort Bend County Fire Marshal shall have the authority to seek the assistance of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration in making a determination regarding an industrial facility.
- C. Any construction that occurred before the effective date of the Fort Bend County Fire Code will be governed by the preceding Fire Code that was effective as of January 1, 2005; unless and until substantial improvement is made to the property.
 - D. Disclaimer of Liability- The degree of fire protection required by the Fort Bend County Fire Code is considered reasonable for regulatory purposes and is based on scientific and engineering considerations. Compliance with the Fort Bend County Fire Code does not imply that any building or the uses permitted within any building will be free from a fire hazard. The Fort Bend County Fire Code shall not create liability on the part of Fort Bend County, any officer, or employee thereof for any damages that may result from reliance on this Code or any administrative decision lawfully made there under. The granting of a permit or issuance of a Certificate of Compliance does not imply that the building can be insured for fire coverage.

3.0 TERMS

- 3.1 **Certificate of Compliance:** A "Certificate of Compliance" means a certificate issued by the County Fire Marshal indicating Construction or Substantial Improvement has been completed in compliance with the Fort Bend County Fire Code as of a specific date and for a specific occupancy.
- 3.2 **Construction:** Construction begins on the date that ground is broken for a building as determined by the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal, or if no ground is broken, on the date that:
 - A. The first materials are added to the original property;
 - B. Foundation pilings are installed on the original property; or
 - C. A manufactured building or relocated structure is placed on a foundation on the original property
- 3.3 **Fort Bend County Fire Marshal:** means the holder of the statutory office of County Fire Marshal for Fort Bend County, Texas or the employee(s) designated by the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal to perform a task required by this Fire Code.
- 3.4 **Fire Code:** "Fire Code" means the Fort Bend County Fire Code as adopted in Section 1.3 of this Code.
- 3.5 **Fire Code Official:** The term "Fire Code Official" as it appears in the IFC is synonymous with the term "Fort Bend County Fire Marshal" or a designee of such individual; however, only the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal has the authority to overrule his or her subordinates or grant variances before applicants for permits or variances may request review by the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court.
- 3.6 **Substantial improvement:** Substantial improvement occurs when:
 - A. The repair, restoration, reconstruction, improvement, or remodeling of a public building, commercial establishment, or a multi-family residential dwelling

consisting of four or more units for which the cost exceeds 50% of the building's value according to the certified tax appraisal roll for the county for the year preceding the year in which the work was begun; or

- B. A change in occupancy classification involving a change in the purpose or level of activity in a building, including the renovation of a warehouse into a loft apartment. For purposes of determining if an improvement is a Substantial Improvement, the applicant for a permit must submit data reflecting cost of the restoration, reconstruction, improvement or remodeling. Costs shall include the value of all labor and materials. A permit is required prior to the start of any Substantial Improvement. For purposes of this code, Substantial Improvement begins on the date that the repair, restoration, reconstruction, improvement, remodeling, the change in occupancy classification begins, or on the date materials are first delivered for that purpose.

- 3.7 Unincorporated Area:** Unincorporated Area means any real property in Fort Bend County, Texas, which is not within the city limits of a municipality.

4.0 PERMITS

- 4.1 Permit Required:** No person shall start or authorize construction or Substantial Improvement of a building or within an unincorporated area of Fort Bend County without first securing a permit under the Fort Bend County Fire Code.
- 4.2 Application for Permit:** The application for a permit will be on a form prescribed by the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal and must be supported by the following:

- A. A completed Fire Code Design and Compliance Review Sheet provided by the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal and signed and sealed by a duly licensed architect or engineer authorized to practice in the State of Texas;
- B. A non-refundable permit review fee; and
- C. Two {2} set of architectural, fire protection systems plans, or other required set of plans must be submitted OR One {1} set of architectural, fire protection systems plans, or other required set of plans in a hard copy format. AND one {1} set of architectural, fire protection systems plans, or other required set of plans must be submitted by electronic source (PDF). Must be on a readable disk and handed in at time of permit submittal:
 - i. types of construction materials and class of interior finish;
 - ii. location of all exits with distances between exits called out – exit width, type and any special requirement shall be stated; and The location of any fire alarm equipment, automatic sprinklers, emergency lighting, etc. required to meet this Fire Code;

- 4.3** The Fort Bend County Fire Marshal may require the submission of additional information, drawings, specifications, or documents if needed to determine whether a permit should be issued.

- 4.4** Determination of Permit Eligibility: After the application is filed, the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal shall determine if the proposed building or substantial improvement meets the Requirements of the Fort Bend County Fire Code.
- A. If it is determined that the proposed building or substantial improvement meets the requirements, then a permit will be issued after the collection of the appropriate fees as outlined in Section 4.5 – Fees, of this Fire Code, and as referred to in EXHIBIT "D"- Fee Schedule.
 - B. If it is determined that the proposed building or substantial improvement does not comply with the requirements of this Fire Code, then the application package shall be returned to the applicant with an explanation of why it was not approved.
- 4.5** Fees: Fees for permits and inspections are to be set by Commissioner's Court. Fees shall be paid by credit card, cashier's check, money order, or personal check. Should the check be returned for insufficient funds, the permit(s) issued becomes null and void. Fees shall be paid at the time plans are submitted for review unless other arrangement have been made and approved by the County Auditor. The County shall deposit all fees received under this section in a special fund in the County treasury, pursuant to Texas Local Government Code 233.0651, and money in that fund shall be used only for the administration and enforcement of the Fire Code. Fee Schedule is shown in Exhibit D.
- 4.6** Fees For Retail Fireworks Permits: A local fire prevention officer who inspects a retail fireworks site for a fire or life safety hazard as authorized by Chapter 352, Local Government Code, as applicable, by Section 352.016, Local Government code, collect payment of that fee from the person who obtained a retail fireworks permit under Section 2154.202 to sell fireworks at an approved commercial site. The inspection and permit fee is once a calendar year for each site and address listed on the permit:
- i. \$100, if the largest building at the site is less than 25,000 square feet, plus \$25 for each additional building, other than the largest building, located at the site.
 - ii. \$200, if the largest building at the site is 25,000 square feet or more, but less than 100,000 square feet, plus \$25 for each additional building, other than the largest building, located at the site; and
 - iii. \$300, if the largest building at the site is 100,000 square feet or more, plus \$25 for each additional building, other than the largest building, located at the site.
- 4.7** Condition of Permit: Construction of a building or a substantial improvement must be started within 180 calendar days of the date the permit is issued or the permit shall be null and void. Upon written request to the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal, two (2) six-month extensions of the permit may be obtained.
- 4.8** Lock Box Permit: The owner or owners association of a gated community or multi-unit housing project must comply with the provision set forth by Local Government Code Chapter 352, Subchapter E. The owner or owners association of a gated community or multi-unit housing project must obtain a Lockbox Permit from the Fire Code Official.

5.0 PERMIT HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 All permit holders must post a copy of the permit on the jobsite in a place clearly visible from the nearest road or street and in a manner meeting the requirements of the standards for permanent numbers set forth in **The International Fire Code 2018- Section 105.3.5**
- 5.2 The Fort Bend County Fire Marshal is authorized to make as many scheduled or unscheduled inspections to the worksite as deemed necessary to enforce this Fire Code and the conditions of the Permit.
- 5.3 Any permit holder that wishes to make a change to the proposed building or substantial improvement, or to construct any building or substantial improvement other than that authorized by the permit, must submit supplemental drawings and/or specifications to the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal for review and approval. If a change complies with this Fire Code and is approved, a copy of the supplemental drawings and/or specifications shall be added to the Permit Holder's file, and the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal shall amend the permit accordingly.

6.0 CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

- 6.1 A building may not be occupied until a conditional or partial certificate of compliance for the building is issued by the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal shall notify the permit applicant in writing of any limitations or restrictions necessary to keep the permit area safe.
- 6.2 The holder of a conditional or partial Certificate of Compliance shall proceed only to the point for which approval has been given, at the permit holder's own risk and without assurance that approval for the occupancy or the utilization of the entire premises, equipment, or operation will be granted.
- 6.3 A "Certificate of Compliance" under this Fire Code shall not be construed as authorizing the owner or operator of any building to afterward operate or maintain such building in such a way as to create, cause or allow the existence of a fire or life safety condition, which condition shall be subject to the independent enforcement authority of the County Fire Marshal.
- 6.4

7.0 APPEALS AND HEARING PROCEDURE

- 7.1 By submitting an application for a permit, an Applicant waives the right to challenge this Fire Code in a court of law without first timely exhausting the Fort Bend County Fire Code's Appeals and Hearing Procedure. If a permit applicant is denied a permit, the applicant may appeal the denial as provided in this Section. The term "Appellant" is used to refer to the appealing party.
 - i. To appeal the denial of a permit application by the Fire Marshal's designee, Appellant must submit a written statement to the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal setting forth the reasons why the permit application should be approved. If the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal sustains the original denial of the permit, the appellant may seek review of the decision by the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court pursuant to Section 7.3 below.
 - ii. To appeal the denial of a permit application by the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal,

Appellant may request that the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court review of the denial, as described in Section 7.3.

7.2 Review by Commissioner's Court-

- i. An Appellant may request that the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court review the County Fire Marshals' a denial of a permit application by sending a written request to the County Judge's Office by certified mail.
- ii. The request to review must be received by the County Judge's Office no later than the tenth business day after the County Fire Marshal (not an appointee) issues the written denial of the permit application.
- iii. Filing a request to review does not stay the Fire Marshal's denial of the application. The denial remains in effect unless and until Commissioners Court reverses the decision of the Fire Marshal.
- iv. The Fire Marshal's denial will be reviewed by Commissioners Court at a regularly scheduled meeting, no later than thirty calendar days of receiving the written request for review. Commissioners Court may either uphold or reverse the decision of the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal.
- v. The Fire Marshal will send written notification of the Commissioners Court date to Appellant by certified mail to address application, unless Appellant specifies a different address in the written request for review. This notice shall be sent no later than seven calendar days prior to the Commissioners Court date.

8.0 ENFORCEMENT AND VARIANCE

8.1 Violation of Conditions of Regulations- Any person having knowledge of a violation of this Code may file a written, sworn complaint with the County Fire Marshal

8.2 Civil Enforcement: If any person violates any provisions of the Fort Bend County Fire Code, the County Fire Marshal may request that the County Attorney file a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction to recover from a person who violates the fire code a civil penalty in an amount of up to \$200 (or the maximum amount allowed by statute) for each day on which the violation exists as allowed in Texas Local Government Code § 233.067.

8.3 Criminal Enforcement: If a building subject to the Fort Bend County Fire Code is occupied without a Certificate of Compliance, the County Fire Marshal may file a complaint with the District Attorney's Office under Section 352.016 and Section 352.022 of the Texas Local Government Code. An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor unless it is shown on the trial of the offense that the defendant has been previously convicted two or more times under this section, in which event the offense is a state jail felony.

8.4 Variances: A request for a Variance to the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal can be made in writing to the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal.

- i. The Fire Marshal shall review the request and deny or grant request for Variance.
- ii. A Variance may be granted only if the following are met:

- a) The applicant has shown good and sufficient cause;
- b) It has been determined that failure to grant the Variance would result in an exceptional hardship to the applicant; and
- c) The granting of a Variance will not result in an increased risk of fire, additional threats to public safety, extraordinary public expense, or create nuisances, cause fraud or victimization of the public; and
- d) Economic hardship shall not constitute the sole basis for granting a Variance.
- e) The Fire Marshal's decision on a Variance Request may be appealed as described in Section 7 of the Fort Bend County Fire Code.

9.0 FORMS AND RECORDS

- 9.1 Forms:** Forms to be used in the administration of this Fire Code shall be promulgated by the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal.
- 9.2 Maintenance of Records:** The Fort Bend County Fire Marshal must maintain all applications for, and file copies of, permits for a retention period of three (3) years. Drawings and specifications on file with the Fort Bend County Fire Marshal may be destroyed after completion of the structure, unless otherwise required by law.

SEVERABILITY AND CONSTRUCTION

The provisions of this Fire Code are severable. If any word, phrase, clause, sentence, section, provision, or part of this Fire Code should be invalid or unconstitutional, it shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions and it is hereby declared to be the intent of the Commissioners Court that this Fire Code would have been adopted as to the remaining portions, regardless of the invalidity of any part. In the event that any provision of this Fire Code might be interpreted in such a way as exceeding the County's authority, such provision should be construed to apply only to the extent authorized by law. In the event of conflict, the Fort Bend County Fire Code approved on this date shall supersede any conflicting fire regulations of the County, except for as provided in Section 2.4

PASSED AND APPROVED BY COMMISSIONERS COURT this ____ day of September, 2019

KP George, County Judge

Vincent Morales Jr. Commissioner, Precinct 1

Grady Prestage, Commissioner, Precinct 2

Andy Meyers, Commissioners, Precinct 3

Ken DeMerchant, Commissioner, Precinct 4

Attest:

County Clerk

EXHIBIT A

ADDITIONS, INSERTIONS, DELETION AND CHANGES TO INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE 2018 EDITION

CHAPTER 1 SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER 1 is modified to incorporate the first section of the adopted Fort Bend County Fire Code and to which this Exhibit is attached is substituted in its place. Notwithstanding any other provision of the Fort Bend County Fire Code which might otherwise be interpreted to the contrary, the Fort Bend County Fire Code shall not be construed as requiring any license or permit not specifically required by Chapter 1 unless required by other applicable law. All Permits are approved by Commissioners Court.

Exhibit B

Fee Schedule

A. Fire Code Building Permit

The base fee for all submitted plans and issue of Certificate of Compliance is \$125 for the copy. This fee is for processing building plans submitted for approval, and will be paid at time of submission of the plans. All projects will use the following fee schedule:

FEES MUST BE PAID WHEN PLANS ARE SUBMITTED

PERMIT	ADDITIONAL DETAILS	FEE
Certificate of Compliance	Fire Final Inspection or Certificate (for existing structure without certificate)	\$125.00
Fire Code Plan Review/Building Permit	Per 1000 sq. ft. of Structure	\$150.00
Civil/Site Plans – Fire Code Review	For Fire lane and Fire Access	\$150.00
Re-Submittal of Construction Plans	If changes are done after the initial plan review, the reviews of changes are required.	\$150.00
Outdoor Fireworks Stand	Per Stand/Building	\$150.00
Indoor Fireworks Stand	Per Stand/Building	\$250.00
Fireworks Display/Show	Per Launch Site	\$200.00
Fire Sprinkler Systems Permit	1 to 20 heads	\$150.00
Fire Sprinkler Systems equipment	21 to 250 heads	\$200.00
Fire Sprinkler Systems equipment	251 to 499 heads	\$250.00
Fire Sprinkler Systems equipment	>500 + .50¢/head additional	\$350.00
Automatic Fire-extinguishing Systems (Commercial Cooking)	Fixed Systems	\$100.00
Fire Alarm/Detection Related Equipment Permit	1 to 10 devices	\$150.00
Fire Alarm/Detection Related Equipment	11 to 25 devices	\$200.00
Fire Alarm/Detection Related Equipment	26 to 150 devices	\$250.00
Fire Alarm/Detection Related Equipment	151 to 499 devices	\$350.00
Fire Alarm/Detection Related Equipment	>500 + .50¢/device additional	\$350.00
New Fire Pumps and Related Equipment for Fire Sprinkler System		\$150.00
Underground Fire Protection	Submittal of underground water supply for fire protection system	\$150.00
New Spraying or Dipping Booths (Paint)	Building/Booths	\$100.00
Re-Inspections	Paid after corrections have been made from initial inspection	\$200.00
Electronic Entrance Gates	Pedestrian and road gates	\$100.00
New Service Station Piping Plan		\$200.00
Work Without Permit	2 X Regular Permit Fee	\$***. **
Tent Permit		\$150.00
Mass Gathering Permit		\$200.00

FORMS OF PAYMENT ACCEPTED ARE: CHECK, CREDIT CARD, CASHIERS CHECK OR MONEY ORDER

B. License Inspection.

State license facilities that require an annual fire inspection for operational permits. (Non-profit or governmental organizations are exempt from this section.)

- Commercial Day cares.....\$100.00
- Nursing homes or care centers.....\$100.00
- State or County licensed Inspections.....\$100.00
- Hospitals.....\$200.00
- Foster homes or adoption.....Exempt

Re-inspection fee for State or County licensed Inspection will be same amount of the original permit paid prior to scheduling for a re-inspection.