



SAN MARCOS FIRE DEPARTMENT

April 9, 2020

RE: SMFD Fire Inspection Practices In Response To COVID-19

Effective Monday, April 13, 2020, The San Marcos Fire Department's (SMFD) Fire Prevention Division will begin conducting several fire-related inspections via Skype. This change is necessary in response to the multiple employees of construction-related trades who have tested positive for COVID-19 after working on jobsites in which City employees have also been present.

Construction, the related development, and "keeping San Marcos moving" is a priority. The goal of the SMFD is to ensure construction and economic development continues in San Marcos in a safe and healthy manner, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To achieve these goals, until further notice, the following inspections will be conducted via Skype:

- Access Control Doors
- Access Control Gates
- Certificate of Occupancy inspections that involve a change of ownership, name, or location; or, involves a previously completed TCO.
- CO2-Monitoring
- Dry Fire Sprinkler System (DFS)
 - DFS 24hr air test
- Elevator
- Fire alarm visual and final inspections at the discretion of the SMFD inspector
- Fixed Suppression System Final
- Food Truck/Trailer
- Generator Final
- Hazmat Permit
- High-Piles Rack Storage Permit
- Kitchen Hood Suppression
- Re-inspections of any type at the discretion of the SMFD inspector
- Small fire protection systems requiring only *Scope of Work* submission
- Special Event
- Standpipe – Hydro/Flush
- Tanks – Above Ground Storage Tank (AST)
- Tanks – Temporary/Construction Site (TTO)
- Tanks – Underground Storage Tank (UST)
- Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (when possible/at discretion of inspector)
- Underground Fire Line – Hydro/Flush/Final
- Wet Fire Sprinkler (WFS)
 - WFS Final

SMFD Fire Prevention will only utilize Skype to conduct the inspections. This allows for one common format that is easily recorded and in which photos of the inspection can also be obtained. FaceTime, Zoom, GoToMeeting, and similar other programs will not be utilized. It is the responsibility of the permit holder or representative to make sure Skype is installed and operating on a suitable device at the permit location prior to the beginning of the scheduled inspection. At the conclusion of the inspection, an *Inspection Report* will be sent to the responsible party via e-mail.

In addition to an electronic device with Skype, the party at the permit location, must also have readily available a tape measure and flashlight for all virtual inspections. Depending on the inspection, a ladder may be required.

Instructions for Skype-based inspections are attached to this notice.

As a reminder, per the fire code, the ultimate responsibility and liability for compliance with the code rests on the property owner. If a violation is not identified during an inspection, it is still the responsibility of the property owner to comply with all provisions of the fire code.

All other inspections will be conducted on-site at the permit location. Until further notice, when the SMFD conducts inspections on-site, the following requirements will be in place:

- All persons except the SMFD inspector and the permit holder or their authorized representative who is accompanying the inspector, must vacate the entire space or floor being inspected.
 - Only one person will be allowed to accompany the SMFD inspector.
 - Both the inspector and the person accompanying the inspector will wear an N95 filter mask or equivalent mask.
 - An *Inspection Report* will be e-mailed to the responsible party at the conclusion of the inspection. To prevent contamination of equipment, a signature will not be obtained from the responsible party. The fire code does not require a signature on an inspection report to be considered valid or an official notice of a violation.
 - Failure to wear a mask or clear the building floor or required space shall result in a cancellation of the requested inspection.
 - A cancelled inspection for failure of the permit holder or their representative to meet these requirements will result in a suspension of all fire-related inspections at the location until such time that all emergency orders related to COVID-19 are lifted by State, County, and local government.
- At this time, all inspections required by a State agency for licensing purposes are suspended. This is being done in accordance with Orders issued by Governor Abbott.
- All Life Safety inspections, commonly referred to as “annual inspections,” have also been suspended.
- All courtesy construction inspections have been suspended. However, Fire Prevention will gladly meet with contractors via phone or Skype to assist in any manner possible.

The City of San Marcos and the SMFD are committed to providing resources and services to ensure safe and healthy construction and development continue in this time of uncertainty. As we work to achieve these goals, we ask for your compliance, patience, and partnership regarding these temporary measures.

Stay safe,
Les Stephens, Fire Chief
Kelly Kistner, Fire Marshal



Remote Skype Fire Inspections

SMFD is committed to providing a safe and healthy construction and development environment. For that reason, we are conducting many of our inspections remotely via Skype at this time.

The remote inspection process requires a video call on a 4G smartphone or tablet in order to interact with the fire inspector.

The processes for remote Skype inspections are as follows:

- a. Schedule your remote video inspection
- b. The fire inspector will initiate the Skype call to you at the time scheduled on Skype and will walk you through the video call
- c. Following the remote inspection a copy of the inspection report will be e-mailed to the person indicated in the property file.

Remote Skype Inspection Steps

1. Schedule Remote Inspection

IMPORTANT NOTES

When providing the contact information for scheduling, be sure to use the phone number of the individual on the job site who will be working through the inspection. **If we do not have this person's phone number, we will be unable to call them and conduct your inspection.**

If the individual who will be on-site working through the inspection has a primary language other than English, please let us know when the inspection is scheduled.

- **Schedule your inspection on-line through the City permitting system as you normally would and a member of Fire Prevention will follow-up with your scheduled request.**

2. Prepare for Remote Video Inspection

- a. **4G Wireless service**
Ensure inspection location and smart phone or tablet has minimum 4G connectivity.
- b. **Skype Account**
An active Skype account with a Skype "name" for performing inspection.
- c. **[Click here for Skype "how to" page.](#)**
- d. **Prepare for inspection**
Prior to scheduled inspection time, ensure all necessary tools based on type of inspection are readily available. For example; tape measure, flashlight, step ladder, etc.

3. Prepare to Receive Skype Call

- a. Ensure smart phone or tablet is fully charged.
- b. Respond to Skype call from Inspector.
- c. Be prepared to accept video call at scheduled time.
- d. Have all required tools as necessary for inspection.
- e. Turn off notifications that may interrupt the Skype call. This is an important step, because notifications can freeze Skype and will cause delays to the inspection and a possible failed inspection.
- f. Use ear buds with a microphone to improve communication.
- g. Set phone so that you have the small screen view of what the inspector sees:
 1. Tap the Skype screen to access the tool bar.
 2. Tap the camera icon.
 3. In the small view the inspector sees, tap the reverse camera icon.

4. The Inspection

- a. Begin inspection at street view looking at structure with the address showing.
- b. Follow the directions of the inspector.
- c. Walk inspection in a clockwise direction horizontally then bottom to top vertically (if more than one floor).
- d. Be patient.
- e. Make note of any items that need correction.

5. Inspection Results

The inspector will tell you in the video call if the inspection has passed or failed.

Inspection failure

- a. The inspector will update our permitting system after the video call is completed. A report of findings from the inspection will be e-mailed to you.
- b. If a re-inspection fee is required, pay online prior to scheduling re-inspection.
- c. Schedule your re-inspection.

If you've scheduled an inspection and have questions please call us at (512) 805-2600 or email us at FirePlan@sanmarcostx.gov.