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PRE-DEVELOPMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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PURPOSE

This document is intended to address the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) during commercial pre-development consultations. All requirements are found in the 2009 International Fire Code (2009 IFC), and Chapter 30 of the City of Conroe Code of Ordinances. It is intended to be a simplified guide applicable to most projects within the City of Conroe. It is not intended to replace the adopted fire code in whole, or in part. Your project may have special requirements not outlined in this document.

FIRE APPARATUS ACCESS AND WATER SUPPLY

1. What are the minimum fire lane specifications for my project?

- Fire lanes must extend to within 150' of all portions of the facility and all portions of the exterior walls of the first story. This measurement is made as hose is laid around the building's exterior, not as a crow flies.
- Fire lanes must be a minimum of 20' wide at all points. For buildings or portions of buildings exceeding 30 feet in height, the minimum width is 26'.
- Dead end fire lanes in excess of 150' must be provided with turnaround provisions. Options are found in Appendix D of the 2009 IFC.
- Fire lanes must be capable of supporting at least 75,000 pounds.
- Fire lanes exceeding 26' in width are only required to be posted/striped on one side. All others must be posted/striped on both sides.

2. Can I have an exception to the 150' fire lane requirement?

- Although the IFC grants the Fire Marshal the ability to extend this requirement for buildings with fire sprinkler systems, exceptions are granted on a case-by-case basis and only when no other options exist.

3. Can my project have a locked gate?

- Yes. Gates must be of the swinging or sliding type with a minimum opening width of 20'. Gates must be secured utilizing a Montgomery County keyed Knox locking device. These must be obtained through the Montgomery County Fire Marshal at fire.codes@mctx.org or (936) 538-8288.

4. How many separate points of fire apparatus access does my project require?

- All buildings and developments must have at least one means of fire apparatus access. A minimum of 2 separate means of access are required under the following circumstances:
 - Buildings exceeding 3 stories or 30' in height.
 - Buildings or facilities exceeding 62,000 square feet. An exception is granted when all buildings are equipped throughout with fire sprinkler systems.

- Multiple-family residential developments having more than 100 dwelling units. An exception is granted when all buildings, including nonresidential occupancies, are equipped throughout with fire sprinkler systems.
- One- or two-family residential developments having more than 30 dwelling units. Exceptions are granted if all dwelling units are equipped with fire sprinkler systems or where there are between 31 and 74 dwelling units, a minimum width of 39' back to back of curb, including 3 traffic lanes with a minimum width of 12' each is provided.

5. What are my project's fire hydrant spacing/location requirements?

- In residential areas, hydrants are required every 500'.
- In commercial areas, hydrants are required every 300'. This includes throughout apartment complexes.
- A hydrant is required within 400' of any commercial building's furthest point not having a fire sprinkler system. This is measured along the fire lane and exterior of the building as hose is laid, not as a crow flies.
- A hydrant is required within 600' of any commercial building's furthest point which has a fire sprinkler system. This is measured along the fire lane and exterior of the building as hose is laid, not as a crow flies.
- A hydrant is required within 100' of the FDC and must be situated so that its use will not cause hose to block the fire lane.

BUILDING

1. Am I required to bring my entire building up to code because I am doing an addition or remodel?

- Possibly. If the work to be performed constitutes a 50% or greater addition or remodel, the entire building will have to be brought up to current code standards.
- Buildings changing from one occupancy type to another occupancy of the Group A (Assembly), Group E (Educational), Group H (Hazardous) or Group I (Institutional) classifications will have to be brought up to current code standards.

2. Does my building require a Knox Box?

- Yes. All newly constructed buildings require a Knox Box, regardless of size and occupancy type. These can be ordered directly from the Knox Company through the Conroe Fire Department website.

FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS

1. Does my project require a fire sprinkler system?

- A fire sprinkler system is required under the following circumstances:
 - The building will be 10,000 square feet or greater in size, regardless of occupancy type. This includes any addition or greater than 50% remodel to any existing unprotected building already 10,000 square feet or greater in size.
 - If, for Group A-1, A-3, and A-4, the occupant load will be 300 or greater or the fire area is to be located on a floor other than the level of exit discharge.
 - If, for Group A-2 (banquet halls, night clubs, restaurants, and taverns and bars), the building will be 5,000 square feet or greater, the occupant load will be 100 or greater, or the fire area is to be located on a floor other than the level of exit discharge.

2. Does my project require a Type I kitchen hood and fire suppression system?

- A Type 1 hood, with fire suppression system, is required at or above all commercial cooking appliances and domestic cooking appliances used for commercial purposes that produce grease vapors. Almost all cooking, of any kind, will produce grease vapors.

3. What is the required location of the Fire Department Connection (FDC)?

- The FDC may be remotely located or placed on the building itself. In either case, the FDC must be located on the address side of the building and be readily accessible from the fire lane.
- The FDC for an apartment building must be located so that it faces the fire lane and is readily accessible from the fire lane.

4. When does my project require a fire alarm system?

- If, for Group A, the occupant load is to be 300 or greater.
- If, for Group B, the occupant load of all floors is to be 500 or greater, the occupant load is to be greater than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge, or the fire area will contain a Group B ambulatory care facility.
- If, for Group E, the occupant load is to be 50 or greater.
- If, for Group F, the occupancy is to be two or more stories in height and is to have a combined occupant load of 500 or more above or below the lowest level of exit discharge.
- All Group H.
- All Group I.
- If, for Group M, the combined occupant load of all floors is to be 500 or greater, or the occupant load is to be greater than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge.
- All Group R.
- Any occupancy that has a fire sprinkler system will require that the system be monitored by a fire alarm system.

PLAN REVIEW AND INSPECTIONS

1. How long will it take to review my plan submittal?

- You should expect to receive comments on plan submittals within 10 business days. Plans are reviewed strictly in the order they are received.

2. Can I submit civil and building plans at the same time for concurrent review?

- Yes. Building plans will not be approved unless they contain a site plan showing at a minimum:
 - All existing and proposed fire hydrants
 - Fire lanes
 - Landscape plan
- These features are only approved **conceptually** during the civil review process. Actual construction shall be completed according to the approved building plans.

3. Can my project be “fast-tracked”?

- The nature of the construction industry has essentially “fast-tracked” all projects. The Conroe Fire Department works diligently to complete all required tasks within the shortest time frame possible for every project. You will find that our responsiveness exceeds that of many other jurisdictions. No project will be given preferential treatment at the expense of other projects.

4. Do you offer after hours or weekend inspections?

- The Conroe Fire Department has a long history of completing all inspection requests within a very short time frame, typically a day or two. Projects should be planned and managed for fire inspections to occur within normal business hours as there is no provision for after hours or weekend inspections.

5. Who should coordinate and schedule inspections?

- All inspections shall be coordinated and scheduled by the project’s General Contractor. This includes all fire protection system inspections. This policy is in place to minimize confusion and to help ensure that all required individuals are present at each inspection.