

THIS ORDINANCE ONLY AFFECTS EXISTING FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS. IF YOU RECEIVED A NOTICE BY MAIL AND YOU DO NOT CURRENTLY HAVE A FIRE ALARM INSTALLED IN YOUR BUILDING, YOU MAY DISREGARD THE NOTICE.

Dear Building Owner and/or Business Owner:

This letter is to notify you of a change in the Code of Miami-Dade County, adding Sections 14-66 and 14-67 which will affect occupancies with existing fire alarm and fire sprinkler systems. The code requires that you obtain a contract for the maintenance of your fire alarm and suppression systems in existing buildings by September 14, 2009.

Primarily, the code amendment is concerned about assuring the reliability of fire alarm systems. This reliability was a major concern in the adoption of the ordinance because fire alarms play a major part in providing notice of a fire in a building and giving sufficient time for building occupants to escape before the fire becomes dangerous. A well maintained system should also eliminate many false alarms and alleviate the danger of apathy by the building occupants when the alarm sounds.

The amendment adds requirements to obtain some form of maintenance contract with a licensed fire alarm contractor for fire alarms and fire sprinkler systems to be in effect at all times, and for the contract to include having the alarm service company send a runner (technician) to respond to alarms within 2 hours. The runner would be able to reset fire alarm systems and handle minor repairs to get the system operational again as soon as possible.

Maintenance of the systems was already required under fire code as well as evacuation of the building or instituting a fire watch following 4 hours without service.

It is believed that costs for contractual pre-negotiated services will be lower than those for uncontracted services, so it is anticipated that the contracts will result in lower costs overall to the building and business owners and will eliminate many unexpected high cost repairs and fire watch expenses.

Contract Types Currently Known to Be Available

Following a survey of approximately 100 alarm contractors within our jurisdiction, we have determined that these companies offer a variety of contracting options that will meet the requirements of this ordinance. Listed below are some typical contract types but may not be representative of all options available. The alarm users are recommended to contact their alarm service company to discuss their best options.

The ordinance is not intended to require or even to encourage alarm users to obtain a full-service contract. The Fire Department will accept the minimum contract agreement that contains some method for maintenance and contains provisions for the runner service to perform the services indicated in the ordinance.

- Basic Cost per Service – Contract with service provided on a set fee schedule for the various services they offer, but only scheduled unless contacted and requested by the alarm user. This contract must include a runner service to respond within 2 hours to system activation or trouble signals. These contracts are typically no cost until and unless the service is used.

- Full service – Turnkey service contract with the highest level of dependability and reliability, including all required scheduled maintenance and testing, response for repairs, and runner service to respond within 2 hours to system activation or trouble signals. Labor is typically included in the scheduled service agreement. The contractor may also work with you to identify and correct problem areas that are causing malfunctions. For a typical three-story apartment with five apartments per floor or a retail business, this option may cost approximately \$4,800 per year. Additional service and parts may be an additional cost.

Process to Comply

The maintenance contract with the licensed fire alarm contractor needs to include:

- Annual inspection report (already code requirement)
- Be on call to provide repairs when necessary
- Available to respond within two hours to reset the system and to provide minor repairs when the system is activated
- Contractor is added to emergency contact information posted near alarm panel

Alarm users (building or business owners) are encouraged to obtain the contracts and to come into compliance as soon as possible to be sure that they are able to secure the services in a timely manner and to better protect the occupants of their buildings. It is also recommended that you shop for quotes from several licensed fire alarm contractors to assure that you obtain competitive pricing.

The timeframes in this ordinance pertain only to this ordinance: other already existing requirements will be enforced with no change in procedure or timeframes. For instance, evacuation of the building or fire watch will still be required when a fire alarm or fire sprinkler system is down for more than four hours as was already required.

During annual inspections, if the contracts are not already in place, fire inspectors will notify you of the requirement. You will need to be in compliance by the final deadline of September 14, 2009. If you need additional time, you will need to file a written request for an extension to the Fire Marshal.



**Fire Marshal
Fire Prevention Division
Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department
9300 NW 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178**

Any request for an extension will need to also include the reason for the extension, a timeframe in which you believe that you can be in compliance (a maximum of 18 months).

Beginning on the September 14, 2009 deadline, if you have not received written approval from the Fire Marshal for an extension of time, the Code Compliance Officer will begin enforcement procedures. So, be sure to submit any extension requests at least one month before that deadline.

Failure to comply or obtain an additional extension within 18 months will result in citations being issued and all enforcement actions being taken. The maximum amount of time that the occupant may have to comply is 3 years (36 months) from the effective date of March 14, 2008 if approved by the fire marshal of the jurisdiction.

These requirements are already in place for new alarm systems, so there is no change as a result of the code amendment for new systems.

We hope that this advance notice will be useful to you and we look forward to working with you to increase the reliability of your vital systems.

Very truly yours,

Chief Manny C. Mena, Fire Marshal
Fire Prevention Division