

ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN

NO. AB-105 :
DATE : November 21, 2012 (Updated 01/01/14 for code references)
SUBJECT : Administrative Permit, Fire and Life Safety
TITLE : **Voluntary Sprinkler Protection for Existing High-Rise Buildings**

PURPOSE : The purpose of this Administrative Bulletin is to outline the procedure for documenting voluntary sprinkler protection of select high-rise buildings in DBI's Permit Tracking System. It applies to existing high-rise buildings that (1) were built before State law required sprinkler protection in high-rise buildings (July 1, 1974) and (2) were excluded from San Francisco's high-rise sprinkler retrofit ordinance (Ord. 377-93).

REFERENCES : 2013 San Francisco Building Code
- Section 3414.27.1, General
- Section 3414.27.2, Additional
- Section 3414.27.3, Permissible omissions
2013 San Francisco Fire Code
- Section 903.2.15.2, Automatic sprinkler system-existing high-rise buildings
- Section 4603.4.2, Automatic sprinkler system for existing high-rise buildings

DISCUSSION : San Francisco has many high-rise buildings that were built before the State required sprinkler protection in high-rise buildings. The City and County of San Francisco passed a high-rise sprinkler retrofit ordinance in 1993 (#377-93) to address this situation. This ordinance was codified in SFBC Section 3414.27 and SFFC Section 4603.4.2. Basically, the ordinance required complete sprinkler protection in high-rise commercial buildings and tourist hotels built before the State law took effect. It also created a number of technical requirements specifically for high-rise buildings covered by the ordinance. It did not apply to pre-1974 high-rise residential buildings where occupants are primarily permanent in nature (currently classified as R-2 occupancies but classified as R-1 prior to 2008), mixed-use occupancies containing an R-1 or R-2 occupancy, or historic buildings. This Administrative Bulletin is intended to provide a mechanism for pre-1974 high-rise buildings to be recorded as fully sprinklered in DBI's Permit Tracking System when they are voluntarily sprinklered throughout. It is similar to the process required for high-rise buildings covered by the ordinance but it is voluntary and more streamlined and culminates with an approved Administrative Permit rather than an approved "Umbrella Permit."

The following criteria and procedures shall be followed to obtain an Administrative Permit for complete sprinkler protection of pre-1974 high-rise buildings exempted from the high-rise sprinkler ordinance.

A. Sprinkler Criteria

1. Schedule a pre-application meeting with SFFD to resolve applicable San Francisco requirements for the subject building. For example, the San Francisco Fire Code requires new high-rise buildings to have two fire pumps and two on-site water supplies for buildings over 200 feet high, fire department connections on each side of the building facing a street, and two risers per zone. These requirements may or may not be applicable, on a case-by-case basis, for existing pre-1974 high-rise buildings not covered by the ordinance.

2. For buildings that do not have any sprinkler protection, the new sprinkler system shall be designed and installed in accordance with the applicable edition of NFPA 13 in effect when the sprinkler permit application is submitted.

3. For buildings that are partially sprinklered, the existing sprinkler systems can remain as-is provided (a) the existing sprinkler systems have been maintained, (b) they are zoned on a per floor basis, and (c) the applicable sprinkler permits can be located in DBI's files. If any of these provisions are not met, the appropriate resolution shall be determined through a pre-application meeting with DBI and SFFD. If any portion of the building is not sprinklered, the new sprinkler system shall be designed and installed in accordance with the applicable edition of NFPA 13 in effect when the sprinkler permit application is submitted.

4. For buildings that are believed to be fully sprinklered, proceed to sprinkler special inspection.

B. Sprinkler Special Inspection

1. The building owner/manager shall engage a fire protection engineer to perform a sprinkler special inspection of the building and prepare a Sprinkler Special Inspection Report. The fire protection engineer shall be licensed in the State of California.

2. The sprinkler special inspector shall review DBI's files to identify previous sprinkler permits for the subject building.

3. The sprinkler special inspector shall walk the entire building to verify complete coverage.

4. If the building does not have sprinklers in some areas, these deficiencies shall be transmitted to the building owner/manager and corrected by a licensed sprinkler contractor before the Administrative Permit application and Sprinkler Special Inspection Report are submitted for review and approval.

5. If the building does not comply with applicable requirements from the San Francisco Fire Code as determined by the pre-application meeting with SFFD (See A.1 above), these deficiencies shall be transmitted to the building owner/manager and corrected by a licensed sprinkler contractor before the Administrative Permit application and Sprinkler Special Inspection Report are submitted for review and approval.

6. For buildings that are completely sprinklered and comply with applicable San Francisco requirements, proceed to Sprinkler Special Inspection Report.

C. Sprinkler Special Inspection Report

1. The sprinkler special inspector shall prepare a Sprinkler Special Inspection Report to be submitted with the Administrative Permit application.

2. The Sprinkler Special Inspection Report shall include the block and lot numbers, a brief description of the building, a table listing all sprinkler permits for the building including the sprinkler permit for correcting observed deficiencies, if any, and a statement that the building is fully sprinklered. If any sprinkler permits are still open, they must be closed before the Sprinkler Special Inspection Report is submitted for review and approval.

3. The report must be signed and stamped by the sprinkler special inspector.

D. Administrative Permit Application

1. A standard building permit application and two copies of the Sprinkler Special Inspection Report shall be presented to Initial Permit Review (IPR). The submitter shall clearly state on the form that it is an Administrative Permit to document complete sprinkler protection. There is no construction so the value of construction on the form is \$1.00.

2. After receiving a permit application number, the submitter shall hand-carry the permit application and Sprinkler Special Inspection Reports to DBI and SFFD stations for approval signatures.

3. After receiving all approval signatures and paying all permit fees, a Job Card and approved permit including a copy of the approved Sprinkler Special Inspection Report will be issued.

4. Inspection requests shall be made and final signatures obtained on the Job Card from the SFFD and subsequently from the DBI Building Inspector.

Whenever future renovations are made to an existing high-rise building which has an Administrative Permit confirming complete sprinkler protection, the approved Administrative Permit application number shall be clearly indicated on the permit application for renovations.

Signed by:

Tom C. Hui, S.E.
Acting Director
Department of Building Inspection

November 21, 2012

Approved by the Building Inspection Commission on 11/21/2012

