

Philadelphia Fire Escape Ordinance Summary*

YEAR ENACTED

2016

*Note: Facade components other than fire escapes and fire escape balconies are covered by a separate ordinance enacted in 2010 and revised in 2014; see the “Philadelphia Facade Ordinance Summary” at facadeordinance.com for further information.

ORDINANCE OR LAW

Bill No. 160462

CODE

Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code

SECTION

Subcode “PM,” Philadelphia Property Maintenance Code, Section PM-702.5, and Subcode “F,” Philadelphia Fire Code, Section F-1011.1

ADMINISTERED BY

Licenses and Inspections (L&I)

ADDRESS

1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, 11th Floor
Public Services Concourse
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1687

TELEPHONE NUMBER

215.686.8686

NUMBER OF BUILDINGS AFFECTED

No estimate has been provided for the number of buildings affected by the ordinance.

FREQUENCY AND DUE DATE OF REPORTS

For affected buildings, the initial inspection shall be conducted, and the required report shall be filed, on or before July 1, 2017. A waiver may be applied for if the fire escapes and fire escape balconies of an affected building have been “substantially restored” within one year preceding the required initial inspection. Each subsequent inspection shall be completed, and the required report shall be filed, within five years of filing the previous inspection report.

If the construction of the fire escape or fire escape balcony was completed after July 1, 2007, the first inspection shall be conducted within ten years after completion of construction. For example, per the ordinance, a building constructed in 2008 would require facade inspections to be performed and reports to be filed in 2018, 2023, etc.

WHICH BUILDINGS ARE SUBJECT TO COMPLIANCE?

Philadelphia’s fire escape and fire escape balcony ordinance applies to all buildings with these features.

ACCEPTABLE INSPECTORS

The professional is required to be a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania licensed Professional Engineer experienced in the practice of structural engineering.



Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.
Engineers, Architects, Materials Scientists
330 Pfingsten Road, Northbrook, IL 60062
Tel. 800-345-3199
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Facadeordinance.com

COMPONENTS SUBJECT TO INSPECTION

The ordinance defines a fire escape as “A system of metal landings, balconies, stairs or ladders attached to a building that are not classified as an exterior stairway and are intended or designed to aid in egress from a building in an emergency.”

A fire escape balcony is defined as “A balcony that projects from the building face and is intended for use in conjunction with a fire escape, an exit stair or an area of refuge.”

METHOD OF INSPECTION

Inspections of fire escapes and fire escape balconies shall be conducted and witnessed by or under the supervision of “a professional” as defined by the ordinance. The ordinance requires the professional to establish whether fire escapes and fire escape balconies are capable of meeting or exceeding load requirements by performing engineering analyses or conducting load tests.

Following the remediation of unsafe conditions, the ordinance requires the posting of a weather-resistant, reflective tag or placard stating the inspection date, the due date of the next inspection, and the professional’s name and contact information.

REPORT

The report requires the inspector to classify fire escapes and fire escape balconies as Safe, Safe with a Repair and Maintenance Program, or Unsafe. The fire escape inspection report submitted is to include sixteen items of specific information as described in the ordinance.

FINES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

Violations are considered to be a Class III offense, which is a \$2,000 fine under Section 1-109 of the Philadelphia Code.



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