

Explanation of “Self-Certification Audit Form to Receive Fire Department Dues”

The numbers below follow the order in sections A and B of the form

1. Did your city, village, or town have fire protection services providing continuous fire protection in the entire municipality?

Your city, town, or village must have a fire department respond to alarms for fires, either through an organized municipal fire department, or through some contractual agreement with another fire department. If you contracted for your fire protection, the contract could be with either public or private fire departments. The key is that the fire protection was continuous throughout the entire year. If the fire protection was provided by another department, you should be prepared to demonstrate the relationship, through a written agreement and/or department response records.

2. Did your fire department have a designated fire chief?

The fire department must have a designated fire chief. You should be prepared to show an auditor a department roster, table of organization, or other sufficient records.

3. Did your fire department by itself, or in combination with another fire department, respond to each first alarm for buildings with at least four firefighters, none of whom was the chief?

To satisfy this requirement you must provide evidence of the number of people who responded to reports of fires. Department fire response records, payroll records, National Fire Incident Reporting System reports, or other records can be shown. It is highly recommended that departments utilize NFIRS. To find out how your department can benefit from using NFIRS, contact your district fire prevention coordinator (see attachment), or call 608-266-5824.

4. Did your fire department provide a training program that addresses safety and health?

In order to qualify for your Fire Department Dues, training must be provided to fire fighters on subjects that relate to safety and health. This training can include, but is not limited to, incident command, rapid intervention teams, firefighter I or II, driver/operator training, fire officer training, physical fitness, self-contained breathing apparatus, hazardous materials, confined space, terrorism, etc. Department training records, either written or electronic, can prove training has been provided.

5. Did your department provide facilities capable of receiving fire alarms and dispatching fire fighters and apparatus without delay?

Your fire department must be prepared to demonstrate that it can receive alarms for fires. Department members can receive fire alarms via radio pagers, telephone ring down systems, or through sirens that can be heard throughout a community. This does not mean that the fire department must provide a building or radio system in order to qualify to receive Fire Department Dues. Communication centers operated by local police departments or county sheriff departments can be utilized, if the centers meet the requirements of this section.

6. *Did your fire department either hold a meeting at least once each month, if your department is volunteer, or if a combination or paid department, maintain sufficient personnel ready for services at all times?*

If you are a volunteer department, you must be able to show that you held monthly meetings. This can be accomplished through department minutes, training reports, meeting rosters, etc.

If you are a paid or combination department, you must be able to provide evidence that you have personnel available to respond. This evidence can be department rosters, daily staffing assignments, or any other electronic or written documents.

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7. *Did your city, village, or town use all of your previous Fire Department Dues in one or more of the following areas? (What an auditor would look for are fire department expenditures in one or all of the approved categories, at least equal the amount of Fire Department Dues that the department/municipality received. Note: Section 101.575(6) of the Wisconsin statutes specifically outlines what Fire Department Dues can be used for.)*

The funds can be used to purchase fire trucks, ambulances, brush trucks, etc. Money can be held in a reserve account for a number of years to accumulate enough money to purchase a vehicle. Funds can also be spent to purchase fire protection equipment used to supplement fire suppression or rescue activities.

The Fire Department Dues can be expended on fire inspection services (e.g. wages and benefits, contracting for fire inspection services, etc.) and for other fire education services or equipment. Money is sometimes spent for fire prevention brochures, props, and other public education items used to promote fire safety.

Sponsoring training seminars, attendance at seminars, tuition, books, travel, and overtime costs are all permitted expenses of the training.

The Fire Department Dues can supplement retirement programs such as the “Length of Service Awards Program” or other approved retirement program sponsored by the local municipality.

8. *Did the chief of your fire department provide for the inspection of every public building and place of employment within that department’s jurisdiction at the following frequency: (a) at least once in each non-overlapping 6-month period; (b) in accordance with the exceptions established in s. Comm 14.02 Wis. Admin. Code; or (c) in accordance with a special order issued by the Department of Commerce?*

A department must be able to demonstrate that it substantially complied* with provisions a, b, or c. Buildings a fire department is aware of must have at least two inspections per year, or at least one per year if the exceptions noted above are relevant. It is possible that there may be public buildings or places of employment that the fire department is not aware of and, within reason, these buildings will not be used to establish noncompliance. The fire chief is responsible for determining the number of inspectable buildings in the community. This list should be updated at least yearly, if not immediately when new buildings are constructed or found.

Seasonal occupancies must be inspected twice per year; there are no rules that permit a fire department to inspect seasonal occupancies only once per year.

If a department applied for and received a special order, it must provide the special order to an auditor. Auditors will base their review on the special order requirements.

*"Substantial compliance," for the purposes of s. 101.575 (4) A) 1. And 2.Stats., means an ample amount of the required activity was performed through a concerted effort aimed at total compliance. A determination of substantial compliance is obtained through a common-sense approach to evaluating whether enough effort was made to comply with the applicable statute or code requirements. Substantial compliance is not a specific number or percent of compliance. A determination of substantial compliance in any one year or regulatory standard does not mean that the same amount of compliance or effort in the following year or in another area of the code automatically equals substantial compliance.

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9. Are written reports of fire inspections made and kept on file by your fire department or its designee?

Written or electronic reports of fire inspections must be kept on file. The minimum information that a fire inspection report must contain is the date of inspection, location of the inspection, violations found, if any, and corrective actions taken, if any. A written or electronic report must be maintained for each inspection conducted by a fire department.

10. Did the fire department provide public education services?

Fire departments should keep records of public fire education programs and tours given. Records for fire station tours can indicate the date and time of the tour, as well as the number of children and adults. Activities such as open houses and fundraising meals can also satisfy this requirement, as long as some type of fire education program accompanied the event. Completion of a training record can also serve as documentation for presentation of a public education program to the public. Chapter Comm 14.47 specifies other fire prevention that a department can engage in to qualify for public education services. These activities include, but are not limited to, fire inspector training, fire prevention week programs, residential fire inspection programs, building plan review programs, speakers bureaus, youth fire awareness programs (e.g. Juvenile Fire Safety Programs), fire extinguisher training programs, and smoke alarm programs.