

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning the Fire Escape Ordinance

Cincinnati Department of Buildings & Inspections

Q. *What does the fire escape ordinance require of owners?*

A. If you own a building that has one or more fire escapes and the building is more than 15 years old, you are now required to hire a registered professional engineer or architect to conduct an exam of your building's fire escape to ensure it is in safe condition.

Q. *What's a fire escape examination?*

A. This means a visual examination of the fire escape by having the professional or someone under their direct supervision check the connections, condition of the metalwork or wood and operation of the fire escape to determine if it maintained in safe condition and will perform its intended purpose.

Q. *Who does the examination?*

A. A State of Ohio registered professional architect or professional engineer shall conduct or directly supervise the person conducting the actual hands-on fire escape examination. This professional shall then provide a written report of the condition of the fire escape to the Department of Buildings & Inspections (B&I.)

Q. *Is this required every year?*

A. No. The requirement to submit the first exam report will be staggered based on the age of the building.

- Owners of buildings that were built prior to 1920 will be required to submit a report by July 1, 2017, and every 5 years thereafter.
- Owners of buildings built between 1920 to 1950 will be required to submit a report by July 1, 2018, and every 5 years thereafter.
- Owners of buildings built between 1951 and 1990 will be required to submit a report by July 1, 2019, and every 5 years thereafter.

The frequency of how often reports are due is based on the exterior wall construction and is outlined in the ordinance.

Q. *How do I determine the age of my building?*

A. B&I may have the age of the building on our current database. The age may also be found by checking the microfilm for the property and viewing the original building permit or other information that may reveal the age of the building. This microfilm is available for viewing weekdays between 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM at the Cincinnati Permit Center, 805 Central Avenue, Cincinnati, 45202. You may also check the public library Sanborne Maps or City Directories.