

# FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL CLUBS AND CABARETS

AS MANDATED BY

## FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

AND THE

## NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

*The following highlights your responsibilities as an owner and/or operator of a Cabaret or Social Club. For more detailed information, contact the New York City Fire Department, Bureau of Fire Prevention, Public Assembly Unit, 9 MetroTech Center, Brooklyn, New York 11201, or call 718-999-2404.*

### DEFINITIONS

**Cabarets** are defined as occupancies open to the general public, in which dancing or other live entertainment is promoted, with or without charge, and food and/or beverages are sold, served or dispensed.

**Social Clubs** are defined as occupancies serving the same general function as Cabarets, but open only to the Social Club's members and guests.

Each numbered requirement in this document has been labeled with a code that specifies the type of occupancy—Social Club or Cabaret—and the occupancy load—fewer than 75 persons or 75 or more persons—to which the requirement applies. The following lists all codes that appear in this document, and each code's meaning:

**ALL** - Applies to all types of occupancies

**C-75** - Applies to Cabarets whose legal occupancy load is less than 75 persons

**C+75** - Applies to Cabarets whose legal occupancy load is 75 persons or more

**SC-75** - Applies to Social Clubs whose legal occupancy load is less than 75 persons

**SC+75** - Applies to Social Clubs whose legal occupancy load is 75 persons or more

### 1. EXITS AND EMERGENCY LIGHTS

#### **1.1 Requirements for All Exits (ALL)**

- Access to the exits must be unobstructed at all times.
- All exit doors in licensed places of public assembly must open in the direction of egress.
- Exit doors must be unlocked and accessible (easily opened) at all times.
- Illegal locking hardware must not be used. Slide bolts, draw bolts, turn knobs or any other bolts must be integrated into the panic hardware.
- If there are 300 or more occupants in the facility, panic hardware is required on all exit doors, unless the doors are not equipped with locks and are accessible (easily opened) at all times.
- The aisles and cross-aisles leading to exits must be wide enough for passage. (Aisles must be 36 inches wide when accommodating less than 300 occupants; aisles must be at least 44 inches wide when accommodating 300 or more occupants.)
- The street must be the final destination point of the exits. Passageways must be unobstructed and adequately illuminated.
- All exits must be clearly marked with lighted signs.

- Directional exit signs must be in place if the exits aren't readily discernible from all vantage points.

### **1.2 Secondary Egress (C+75, SC+75)**

- If a Cabaret or Social Club has an occupancy load greater than 75 persons, there must be a remote secondary means of egress, which leads to the street. The number of additional exits must correlate to the number of required, approved exits, per the Department of Buildings floor plan.
- All secondary egress doors must open in the direction of egress.

### **1.3 Emergency Lights (C+75, SC+75)**

- Emergency lights are required for all Cabarets and Social Clubs whose occupancy load is 75 or more persons.
- Emergency lights must be powered by an independent source of electricity. Usually, they will be powered by battery packs. Sometimes, however, generators are used to provide power.
- Ensure that the emergency power source is operable. Emergency lights can be checked individually by using the test button on the outside cabinets. (This is preferable to testing them collectively by shutting down the main power, which could create panic if the system turns out to be inoperable.)

## **2. SPRINKLER SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.1 Sprinklers with Central Station Connection (C+75)**

- Sprinklers must be in accordance with Local Law 41.
- The sprinklers' main control valves must be sealed fully open.
- If present, the pressure gauges must be serviceable.

### **2.2 Monthly Record Card for Sprinklers (C+75)**

- Must be located at or near the main control valves.
- Must be signed by a licensed plumber or person with a certificate of fitness.
- Must be valid, with the latest date of inspection indicated.

## **3. EXTINGUISHER AND FIRE GUARD REQUIREMENTS**

### **3.1 Extinguishers (ALL)**

- One fire extinguisher is required for every 2,500 square feet of space (or portion thereof) in the occupancy. The required number of extinguishers must be on the premises.
- Fire extinguishers must be inspected monthly to ensure accessibility and operability (the latter can be confirmed by checking the reading on the extinguisher's pressure gauge). This monthly inspection does not require an FDNY certificate of fitness holder.
- Fire extinguishers also require an annual inspection. The annual inspector must possess an FDNY certificate of fitness.

- Each extinguisher must display an inspection record tag, updated after *every* inspection.
- Documentation must show that the extinguisher has been hydrostatically tested within the past six years. This test must be performed by an FDNY-certified portable fire extinguisher servicing facility.
- All servicing of fire extinguishers can only be performed by someone who holds an FDNY certificate of fitness.

**3.2 Fire Guards for Each Exit (C+75)**

- Fire guards must perform their duties in accordance with Local Law 41.
- Employees serving as fire guards must be present when the premises are open for business.
- The fire guards' names must match those listed on the certificates of fitness.

**4. FIRE ALARM REQUIREMENTS**

**4.1 Interior Fire Alarm with Central Station Connection (C+75)**

- Interior fire alarms must be in accordance with Local Law 41.
- The manual pull stations must be located along the natural paths of egress.
- The boxes must have a one-inch-wide, diagonal stripe, indicating the signal will be received by a central station company.
- The handles must be up. (If the handles are down, the system isn't in operating order.)
- The alarm control panel must indicate that the alarm is operable. (Some newer models produce a computer printout with this information.)
- The central station telephone number should be on the front of the panel. Call and verify the connection.

**4.2 Record/Logbook for Interior Fire Alarm (C+75)**

- The logbook must contain a record of daily and monthly tests.
- A person holding an FDNY certificate of fitness must test the interior fire alarm each time prior to opening the premises.
- An approved central station alarm company or an FDNY certificate of fitness holder must conduct monthly tests to the central station.

**5. SPECIAL EFFECTS AND PYROTECHNICS**

**5.1 Requirements for a Lawful Pyrotechnic Display (ALL)**

*The same set of rules apply to all facilities wishing to make use of a pyrotechnic display—regardless of the size of the occupancy or the display. In order to lawfully put on a pyrotechnic display, the facility must:*

- Submit a letter of request for a pyrotechnic permit.
- Hire a pyrotechnician certified by the Explosives Unit to operate the display.
- Have members of the Explosives Unit on-hand at the site for the duration of the display, including unloading, setup and breakdown of the display. These FDNY members will ensure compliance with all fire codes and regulations.

- Ensure that there is enough fire protection on-hand for the display. Depending on the size of the display, this could come in the form of an engine company on standby at the occupancy, extra extinguishers at the occupancy or, in some cases, a charged line, ready to be used by the engine company at the occupancy.

**5.2 Requirements for the Pyrotechnic Permit (ALL)**

- A sketch of the storage facilities must be available.
- The location of all special effects must be evident.
- A letter of authorization must be submitted by the property owner to the FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention Explosives Unit, allowing his property to be used in and for a special effect.
- Copies of the certificate of insurance and workman's compensation certificate must be submitted.
- All those supervising a discharge of a special effect must have certificates of fitness as special effects pyrotechnists.
- If the occupancy is being used for the production of a film, theatre or broadcasting events, a copy of the permit issued by the Mayor's office for the event must be submitted.
- All materials used in the production of a special effect must be approved by the FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention's Explosives Unit.
- A detailed agenda of effects showing the type and location of effect and quantity of explosives and materials used in producing the special effect must be submitted.
- The proximity of stunt personnel, actors and the public in relation to the special effect must be explained.
- A certificate of flameproofing for nearby combustibles (drapery, furniture, etc.) must be provided. (Even with this certificate, the Explosives Unit representative still reserves the right to perform a flammability test if deemed necessary.)
- Approval for the request from the FDNY Explosives Unit, which is only granted once an inspector from the Explosives Unit and a Chief Officer from the local Battalion or Division complete a joint inspection and deem the site safe. If the inspection is satisfactory and all requirements have been met, an FDNY permit will be issued.

**6. PAPERWORK AND CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS**

**6.1 Flameproofing and/or Noncombustibility Affidavits (ALL)**

- Notarized affidavits that combustibles have been flame-proofed must have been signed within the past year and made available upon request.
- Notarized affidavits of noncombustibility must be available to prove that materials are inherently flame-resistant.

**6.2 Open Flame Permit (ALL)**

- Required for facilities in which open flame is present.
- Open flame permits issued annually by the FDNY must be up to date.

**6.3 Certificate of Occupancy (ALL)**

- A Certificate of Occupancy is required if the occupancy is located inside a building built after 1938. If the building was constructed prior to 1938 but since then there has been a change in occupancy, a Certificate of Occupancy is also required.
- A copy of the building's Certificate of Occupancy must be posted.
- The maximum occupant load cannot be exceeded.
- Activities at the premises must be consistent with the occupancy designation on the certificate.

**6.4 Occupancy Sign (C+75, SC+75)**

- The premises' maximum legal occupancy load, as indicated on the Certificate of Occupancy, must be posted in the form of an occupancy sign.

**6.5 Place of Assembly Permit (C+75, SC+75)**

- The maximum occupant load and legal use terms on the Place of Assembly Permit must be consistent with the language on the Certificate of Occupancy.

**6.6 Seating Plan (C+75, SC+75)**

- Premises may design more than one seating plan, but each of these plans must be approved by the Department of Buildings, and tables, chairs and other furniture must be set up as indicated in at least one of the plans.

**6.7 Consumer Affairs License (C+75, C-75)**

- All Cabarets must have a Consumer Affairs License, regardless of the occupancy load.
- The owner's identity must match that on the liquor license issued by the New York State Liquor Authority.

**6.8 Certificate of Fitness for Person Who Tests and Maintains Interior Fire Alarm (C+75)**

- There must be a certificate of fitness on file for the person who tests the alarm each time the premises open.
- If an outside service handles the monthly tests, it must be an FDNY-approved central station alarm company, and receipts or a contract must be on file on the premises.

**6.9 Fire Guard Certificates of Fitness (C+75)**

- There must be an FDNY certificate of fitness on file for each employee designated as a fire guard.
- The number of fire guards must correlate to the number of required, approved exits, per the Department of Buildings floor plan.

**6.10 Fire Drill Conductor Certificate of Fitness (C+75)**

- There must be an FDNY certificate of fitness on file for the employee who conducts fire safety drills.