



## **Fire Safety Act: Regional District Fire Inspections and Investigations —PROCEDURES**

### **AUDIENCE**

These procedures are intended for the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC), Fire Services Advisors (FSA), regional districts (including fire services) and building owners and occupiers.

### **BACKGROUND**

- These procedures:
  - are specific to regional districts.
  - support the Province’s commitment to a single standard of fire safety for public buildings in the province.
  - are consistent with current practices under the *Fire Services Act*. At present, FSAs within the OFC support local authorities<sup>1</sup> with conducting fire inspections and investigations.
  - address the issues raised by members of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), that due to a lack of expertise, capacity, and funding constraints, regional districts may need support from the OFC to conduct fire inspections of public buildings and fire investigations under the *Fire Safety Act* once it comes into force.
- The OFC will provide advice and/or perform fire inspections of public buildings and fire incident investigations as requested by regional districts<sup>2</sup>. The OFC will continue to work with regional districts to explore other options for conducting fire inspections of public buildings and fire investigations in regional districts.

### **Rationale**

Below is the rationale for the OFC supporting regional districts with conducting fire inspections and investigations under the *Fire Safety Act*.

- **Consistency**—FSAs are regionally located throughout the province. They regularly conduct fire inspections and investigations according to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, which supports a consistent and standardized approach to those activities throughout British Columbia.

<sup>1</sup> Under the *Fire Safety Act*, local authorities are defined as a municipality, regional district, or any authority prescribed by regulation.

<sup>2</sup> Agreed upon by the Single Standard of Fire Safety Working Group (SSFSWG) and supported by UBCM Executive, November 17, 2023.



- **Expertise**—FSAs are trained in accordance with NFPA standards and maintain their professional development requirements. The skills of fire inspectors and fire investigators are perishable, and therefore, need to be routinely maintained.
- **Capacity and resources**—Some regional districts do not have the capacity, expertise, or funding to conduct fire inspections and investigations without support from the OFC.

## DOCUMENTATION AND REVISIONS

- The OFC will be responsible for developing a tracking system to document regional districts' requests for assistance with fire inspections and investigations.
- Any decisions on record keeping by the regional district regarding fire inspections and investigations will be solely at their discretion and developed to meet their internal procedural requirements as the regional districts are not defined as a monitoring entity under the *Fire Safety Act*.
- The OFC will meet with UBCM annually before April 1 to review the effectiveness of these procedures and make amendments, as required, to reflect new information or processes.

## APPLICATION

- OFC FSA staff will support regional districts with fire inspections and investigations upon request.
- Some regional districts have the expertise, capacity, and funding to conduct fire inspections and investigations within their jurisdictions.
- Regional districts will not incur any financial costs for the services provided by the OFC. This arrangement will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms and definitions apply to these procedures only.

**Local Authority:** As defined in the *Fire Safety Act*, means the council of a municipality, the board of a regional district and any authority prescribed by regulation.

**Designated Inspector:** Any person, or class of persons, designated by a Local Authority as a fire inspector under the *Fire Safety Act* (when it comes into force).

**Designated Investigator:** Any person, or class of persons, designated by a Local Authority as a fire investigator under the *Fire Safety Act* (when it comes into force).

**Fire Department:** A department established and operated as a Local Authority service responsible for the prevention or suppression of fires in a defined Fire Protection Area by a Local Authority or a board, or commission of a registered society having the responsibility for the management or conduct of work or services through a service agreement, or equivalent of any of the above.

**Fire Protection Area:** A geographically defined area that is determined by a Local Authority service



establishment bylaw, municipal service, or service agreement between the Local Authority for the fire department and the party benefiting from the fire protection service by means of an established service delivery agreement or equivalent.

## PROCEDURES

- Under the *Fire Safety Act*, Local Authorities are required to designate fire inspectors and fire investigators for their jurisdictions. There is a one-year transition period (from the date the FSA came into force) for Local Authorities to train designated inspectors and designated investigators before they will be required to meet the standards established by the Fire Commissioner. (**Note:** The OFC will provide training and training-related documents for these individuals to meet the new standards.)
- The current Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner (LAF) function will be phased out three months after the *Fire Safety Act* comes into force.
- A regional district Designated Inspector or Designated Investigator can request assistance from the OFC to conduct an inspection or investigation.
- The procedures for regional districts to request assistance are listed below:

### 1) Inspections

- a) Situations that may require an inspection:
  - i) changes in major occupancy and use of a public property or premises
  - ii) new public building being constructed
  - iii) complaint received about a premises
  - iv) at the request of the owner or occupier of a premises
- b) Process:
  - i) Regional district may first determine if the required action is:
    - (a) to issue a Fire Safety Assessment Checklist (to be completed by an owner or agent), or, if
    - (b) the location requires a physical inspection, then assign the required action to the Designated Inspector(s) within their jurisdiction
  - ii) If the regional district's Designated Inspector(s) is/are unavailable, or requires support, then the regional district representative may initiate a request for support from the OFC by sending an email to [OFC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:OFC@gov.bc.ca) with the following details:
    - (a) address of inspectable premises
    - (b) reason for inspection
    - (c) identification and contact information of owner/occupier of premises
  - iii) The OFC will assign the task to the appropriate OFC FSA. The FSA will contact the owner to enter the premises at a reasonable time and date
  - iv) The OFC FSA will perform and record the inspection



- v) The OFC FSA will enter the information into the single standard of fire safety tracking system (future system) and provide a copy of the fire inspection report to the regional district and building owner or owner's agent.

## **2) Investigations:**

- a) Situations requiring investigations:
  - i) all fire incidents (post-fire)
  - ii) any fatalities due to a fire incident
  - iii) high-impact to community fire incidents
- b) Process:
  - i) As required under the *Fire Safety Act*, the owner/occupier would inform their local fire department or the fire commissioner (the OFC) of the fire incident
    - (a) If the information comes to OFC directly then the OFC must inform the regional district of the incident having occurred in their jurisdiction
  - ii) The regional district will determine if their Designated Investigator(s) is/are able to conduct the investigation of the fire incident
  - iii) If the regional district's Designated Investigator(s) is/are not available, or is unable to begin the investigation within the legislated five days, or there was a fatality because of the fire, or the incident was significant to the community, the regional district may contact the on-call OFC FSA by calling the Emergency Co-ordination Centre (ECC) at 1-800-663-3456
  - iv) Caller will provide the following details:
    - (a) address/location of the fire incident
    - (b) fire type (building/vehicle/outdoor/etc.)
    - (c) status of fire suppression efforts
    - (d) any details of the fire provided by the local fire department
  - v) On-call FSA will request support from the appropriate OFC FSA member
  - vi) Assigned OFC FSA will attend the scene and investigate the fire incident
  - vii) Assigned OFC FSA will collect all required information and complete the appropriate Fire Inventory Reporting Evaluation System (FIRES) reports
  - viii) OFC FSA will inform the regional district of the actions taken to support the regional district and the fire investigation details that were recorded in FIRES

**END OF PROCEDURES**