



Motion Picture & Television Production

Fire Safety Requirements in Massachusetts

Welcome to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Department of Fire Services (DFS) and the Massachusetts Film Office are pleased to provide this list of frequently asked questions (FAQ's) about fire regulations and safety in Massachusetts. The brochure covers only the most common questions about motion picture and television production safety in the state.

The DFS Code Compliance & Enforcement Unit works in conjunction with local communities and the film industry to ensure that motion picture and television production is conducted safely and in accordance with the state fire code.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the state fire code in Massachusetts?

The state fire code in Massachusetts is known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code, 527 CMR 1.00. Visit www.mass.gov/dfs and search for 527 CMR 1. This code adopts NFPA 1 (2012 Edition), and includes Massachusetts amendments. In the code are the appropriate editions of the NFPA standards that must be met.

Where can the requirements for motion picture and television production in the state fire code be found? The requirements are found in Chapter 32. This section adopts NFPA 140 (2008 Edition), which also has Massachusetts amendments.

Is a state license required to use pyrotechnic special effects in production? Yes. A Certificate of Competency (license) is required for individuals who conduct or engage in the use of special effects. This license is issued by the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Does a special effects company need a company license? Yes. Each company engaged in the use of pyrotechnics shall possess a Pyrotechnic User's Certificate issued by the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Where does one apply for a special effects permit? A properly licensed pyrotechnician, working under their company's User's Certificate, shall submit a permit application to the local fire department. After the fire department has signed the permit application, a copy is then sent to the State Fire Marshal's Office for review.

When should applications for special effects be submitted to the local fire department?

The fire code requires that the application for permit be submitted to the local fire department no less than 20 days prior to the event.

Where are the requirements for the use of pyrotechnics found? Chapter 65 of the state fire code addresses the use of pyrotechnics. Pyrotechnic use before a proximate audience shall be

(over) →



Department of Fire Services

Code Compliance and Enforcement Unit • www.mass.gov/dfs • (978) 567-3375

conducted in accordance with NFPA 1126 (2011 Edition). Flame effects before an audience shall be conducted in accordance with NFPA 160 (2011 Edition).

What permits are required from the local fire department for soundstages and approved production facilities? Permit requirements can be found in Section 32.4.2 of the state fire code.

Facilities need these permits:

1. Use of pyrotechnics (Section 65.3)
2. Use of open flames (Section 65.4)
3. Welding and cutting (Chapter 41)
4. Storage and use of flammable or combustible liquids or gases (Chapters 63 and 66)
5. Use of aircraft (Section 1.12.8.18)
6. Presence of motor vehicles within a building (Section 1.12.8.18)
7. Productions with live audiences (Section 1.12.8.18)

What permits are required from the local fire department for production locations? Permit requirements can be found in Section 32.5.2 of the state fire code.

Locations need these permits, unless waived by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ):

1. Use of the site as a production location where more than 30 on-site personnel are present (Section 32.5.2.1)
2. Use of pyrotechnic special effects (Section 65.3)
3. Use of open flames (Section 65.4)
4. Welding and cutting (Chapter 41)
5. Storage and use of flammable or combustible liquids or gases (Chapters 63 and 66)
6. Use of aircraft (Section 1.12.8.18)
7. Presence of motor vehicles within a building (Section 1.12.8.18)
8. Use of liquefied petroleum gases (Section 69.1)
9. Productions with a live audience (Section 1.12.8.18)
10. Use of fog and haze (Section 1.12.8.18)

What are the code requirements for productions with flame effects in front of a live audience? NFPA 160 (2011 Edition) contains the requirements for open flame use and these activities are subject to the approval of the local fire department.

Are permits required to store pyrotechnics at the production location/facility? Yes. All magazines, buildings and structures are required to be permitted by the State Fire Marshal's Office and the local fire department.

Are fire details required by the local fire department? The local fire department may require standby fire personnel for hazardous operations and pyrotechnic special effects use on a case-by-case basis.

Who is the contact for questions regarding the building code, soundstage construction, or any other building related issues? In most cases, contact the local building official in the community where the work is being done. The local building official issues all building permits and provides guidance. For work on state property, contact a state building official at 617-727-3200.

Timing

Production companies are strongly encouraged to contact local fire and building officials as soon as possible. Early dialogue leads to stronger working relationships and smooth running productions.

Application Forms

Applications for state issued licenses can be found at www.mass.gov/dfs. Search for DFS licenses.

Applications for permits issued by the local fire departments can be obtained by contacting the local fire department.

Contact Information

For information about the state fire code and fire safety, contact the DFS Code Compliance and Enforcement Unit at:

- Stow Headquarters (Eastern MA) 978-567-3375
- Springfield Office (Western MA) 978-567-3813