

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Emergency Lighting Requirements, Testing and Inspection

Updated January 2025

Seattle Fire Code Sections 1008 and 1104 require that “means of egress” (including aisles, corridors and stairways, and the exits to the outside) be illuminated at all times the building is occupied, to help people exit safely and quickly during emergencies.

The power supply for the illumination should normally be provided by the building’s electrical supply. In the event of power failure, an emergency power system is required to illuminate the areas.

A few building types and areas are exempt from this requirement. For the following exempt building types, emergency lighting is recommended but not required:

- Buildings with less than seven floors built before 1956.
- Within residential dwelling units and sleeping units in Group R apartments, hotels, motels and dormitories.
- Within sleeping units in institutional occupancies.
- Group U occupancies, such as, agricultural buildings, barns, carports, greenhouses, private garages, sheds.
- Aisle accessways in Assembly Group A occupancies.

Seattle Fire Code Section 1032.10 includes requirements to inspect and test emergency lighting equipment. Routine maintenance, inspection and operational testing shall be overseen by a properly instructed individual.

Testing

Monthly Activation Test

An activation test of emergency lighting is required

each month. The test will ensure that :

- The lighting activates automatically upon building power failure.
- The lighting stays illuminated for a minimum of 30 seconds.

Annual Power Test

A power test of battery-powered emergency lighting is required each year. The power test will ensure that:

- The lighting operates for a minimum of 90 minutes.
- The lighting stays sufficiently illuminated for the duration of the test. Initial illumination must be at least an average of 1 footcandle (11 lux) and a minimum at any point of 0.1 footcandle (1 lux) along the path of egress at foot level. Illumination levels may decline to .6 footcandle (6 lux) average and a minimum at any point of .06 footcandle (.6 lux) at the end of the 90 minutes.

Records

Records of all monthly activation testing and annual power testing should be maintained on the premises for a minimum of three years and available for inspection by the fire code official.

The records shall include:

- The location of the emergency lighting tested.
- Whether the unit passed or failed.
- The date of the test.
- The person completing the test.

See Appendix 1 for example formats of the required records.



Appendix 1:**Example of Emergency Lighting Testing and Inspection Records***Monthly Activation Test Record*

Monthly pass or fail test of lighting to ensure automatic activation upon building power failure and 30 seconds of illumination.

Month	Date	Location of Light	Pass or Fail	Individual Conducting Test
January	01/10/ 2015 2025	Back hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
February	02/08/ 2015 2025	Back hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
March	03/09/ 2015 2025	Back hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	Jane Smith
		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	Jane Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	Jane Smith
April	04/10/ 2015 2025	Back hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith

Continued for each month...

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		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
March	03/09/2015	Back hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	Jane Smith
		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	Jane Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	Jane Smith
April	04/10/2015	Back hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Front hallway	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith
		Side door	Pass activation Pass illumination	John Smith

Continued for each month...