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15 Point Plan for Church Fire — Safety Compliance Frequently Asked Questions

My church is not in Providence, do these regulations apply to our building?

Yes. These requirements come from the State Fire Marshal, and apply to all churches, state wide. The Providence Fire Department is making a point to make its inspections this year.

We have a beautiful, historic sanctuary and do not want to see fire-detection equipment become the visual focal point!

Neither do we! As church architects and church-goers ourselves, we understand the importance of an attractive, cohesive visual worship experience. Using our architectural skill and working closely with our electrical engineer and the fire marshal, we have been able to help create safe spaces that retain their historic character.

In an effort to increase fire-safety, we have added residential smoke detectors and plastic "exit" signs. Does that keep us safe enough?

While that is better than nothing, it does not constitute compliance. The code requires commercial grade smoke & heat detectors (often hard-wired and interconnected), and illuminated exit signs with battery back-up.

After many years in one location, recently our church relocated to a new building. Can we utilize the 15 point plan for compliance?

Generally, no. These 15 points apply to church buildings in use prior to Jan 1, 2008. A church occupying a building after that date would need to comply with all the requirements of the Fire Code (which often means sprinkler system, municipally connected fire alarm and emergency lighting). The only exception could be if the new building was continuously used as a church prior to 2008.

In our building, we have a sprinkler system, but no fire alarm. Will that be considered sufficient?

Current sprinkler regulations require that when sprinklers go off, a particular alarm sounds. At least a partial commercial alarm system would need to be added.

This Q & A is provided as a service to the churches of Providence, and constitutes Robinson Design's interpretation of the State Fire Marshal's 15 point plan for compliance for churches. This is available. at http://www.ri.gov/RIFSC/interpretations/int_details.php?id=167&agency=FSC or <http://bit.ly/dpuF05> .

Remember, the authority having jurisdiction, generally your local fire marshal, must be consulted for official rulings and approvals.