



AUDIT DEPARTMENT

Audit Report

Development Services Fire Prevention

November 2013

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November 8, 2013

Mr. Don Burnette
Clark County Manager
500 South Grand Central Parkway, 6th Floor
Las Vegas, Nevada 89106

Dear Mr. Burnette:

At the request of the Director of Development Services, we performed an audit of Development Services Fire Prevention policies and procedures. The audit reviewed policies and procedures for the period of April 1, 2013 through August 22, 2013.

The objective of this audit is to determine if policies and procedures in place are effective and operating efficiently.

To accomplish our objectives, we interviewed appropriate personnel from the following areas: Intake, Finance, Plans Examination, Scheduling, and Fire Inspection and performed walkthroughs of these areas. We examined the plans application process for timeliness. We also examined the time reporting process by examining daily operations of plans examination and fire inspection and tracing the time reported to actual activity performed, as recorded in Naviline.

Overall, it appears that there are sufficient controls in place in the area of Fire Prevention. However, we have several suggestions that may enhance the efficiency of the departmental operations and procedures. We recommend that updated policies and procedures be distributed to all employees, a complete listing of County commercial buildings with associated risks be updated and maintained, employee administrative time be charged to specific areas allowing for enhanced management review, rotation of fire inspection areas, addition of supervision in the area of Plans Examination, further management review of overtime, more fire prevention training, and the addition of wireless use for inspection handheld devices.

A draft report was provided to the Director of Development Services for comment and his response is included. We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Development Services Fire Prevention.

Sincerely,

Angela M. Darragh, CPA
Audit Director

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BACKGROUND Fire Prevention functions as a division of the Development Services Building Department. Fire Prevention provides Clark County construction and business customers with plan review, inspection, and permit management services.

Fire Prevention encompasses several functions that provide permit management and approval for Clark County businesses and construction projects. These functions include Intake, Plans Examination, Scheduling, Fire Inspection, and Finance. All departments work together to expedite the permit application process.

As of July 31, 2013, all Fire Prevention personnel are located in the Development Services Building location at 4701 West Russell Road. Previously, the Fire Prevention Bureau services were located at various fire stations throughout Clark County. For centralization purposes, Fire Prevention services are part of the Building Department operations.

Development Services Fire Prevention collects a fee for permits requested. A fee schedule is prepared and fees are collected when the application is submitted.

**OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND
METHODOLOGY**

The audit objective is to determine whether Fire Prevention controls were effective in providing timely application processing, plan review, and inspection services.

To accomplish our objectives, we reviewed department policies in place and interviewed personnel from the following areas of Fire Prevention: Intake, Plans Examination, Records, Fire Inspection, Scheduling, and Finance.

We reviewed Naviline reports and sampled 20 applications opened during April 2013 for overall process review and application processing. We also reviewed 30 permit applications approved during May 2013 and evaluated the plans examination function. The International Fire Code was reviewed to determine that all applicable areas stated were available for permit application with Clark County. Furthermore, we sampled the schedules of three Fire Inspectors from June 26, 2013, through July 9, 2013, and reviewed related reporting procedures. Finally, we performed a review of Fire Inspector

overtime reported during the month of May 2013.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

RESULTS IN BRIEF Overall, we found that the controls over the processes performed by Fire Prevention appeared effective to provide reasonable assurance that applications are being processed appropriately. However, we determined that there are some process enhancements that may allow the application process to become timelier and department procedures to run more efficiently.

DETAILED RESULTS

Policies and Procedures Are Needed Policies and procedures have been established, but they have not been distributed and communicated to the employees of Fire Prevention. Policies and procedures are important to ensure functions are performed consistently among employees using the methods approved by management. Employees are unsure of how to proceed in certain situations and a co-worker may approach the same issue differently. This would be rectified by issuing standardized policies and procedures.

Recommendation

1. Establish or update policies and procedures.
2. Make policies and procedures available and distributed to Fire Prevention employees for use and reference.

Plans Exam Assignment Should be Controlled When plans are received by Intake, they are often assigned to generic assignment queues. All Plans Examiners are responsible for monitoring the queues and self-assigning plans for review. However, in our testing of 30 applications, we noted eight instances (26.67%) where the application was delayed an average of 3.6 days. Such delays extend customer wait times for the reviewed plans and

permits. We believe this is due to a delay in plans queue review and self-assignment of the plans.

Recommendation

1. Change the process so that a supervisor monitors and controls the plans examination queue to ensure proper plan assignment.

Fire Inspectors Should be Rotated

Fire Inspectors are assigned a specific geographic area in which they conduct inspections and reviews. Current policy does not provide for a rotation of inspectors in different areas. Inspector rotation would provide cross training, a fresh perspective, and may reduce the risk of areas not being inspected. This would benefit the County as well, since Fire Inspectors with specified knowledge would be able to apply that insight to areas that are newly assigned to them.

Recommendation

1. Update the policy and allow inspectors to be periodically rotated in the different geographic areas.

A List of Commercial Buildings Needs to be Established

Clark County is divided into areas with Fire Inspectors assigned and responsible for inspections in each area. Fire Prevention does not maintain a listing of commercial buildings for Fire Inspectors' use. A listing was in the process of being prepared by Fire Prevention earlier this year, but the special project was halted and not resumed. Having a list of all commercial buildings would provide inspectors with a tool to assist them in scheduling their time efficiently.

Recommendation

1. Compile and maintain a listing of all commercial buildings.
2. Assign a risk to each building to be used for scheduling purposes.

Buildings Should Be Inspected Based on Risk

Currently, there is no risk assessment done to prioritize inspections based on risk. Commercial buildings should be assigned a risk factor to ensure that the buildings with the most risks are inspected more often than those with low risk. This would allow for a more efficient and effective use of Fire Inspector's time and ensure that the highest risk buildings are regularly inspected.

Recommendation

1. Assign a risk to each building to be used for scheduling purposes.

Fire Inspection Checklists Should be Implemented

Fire Prevention does not use any inspection checklists to aid Fire Inspectors for use in high rise building inspection. We believe checklists would assist in documenting the high rise inspection process, provide quality control over the process, and make more efficient use of the Fire Inspector's time.

Recommendation

1. Create and issue inspection checklists for high rise buildings.

Fire Inspection Handheld Wireless Device Should Include Network Access

Fire Inspectors are performing all computer work at the Development Services Building location on Russell Road. Based on work load and type of inspections, the inspectors need to use the computer on a daily basis. Time management could be improved with the use of hand held devices that allow access to the programs needed to document inspections. The Fire Inspectors are scheduled to receive hand held devices; however, the devices will not contain air cards which would allow for internet connection in the field.

Recommendation

1. Consider the inclusion of air cards for use in the hand held devices.

Specialized Training and Cross Training Could be Improved

Fire Inspectors should have access to more training programs that would enhance their knowledge and provide cross-training. During our interviews, we heard numerous complaints that training was provided in the form of division meetings with administrative information rather than training on areas encountered by Inspectors. We believe training should be offered for unique situations to provide a resource for inspectors that may not have specific experience in that area.

Recommendation

1. Develop training programs for Fire Inspector continuing education.

No Accountability for Administrative Hours

Plans examiners and Fire Inspectors can charge time to administration codes without providing any type of detail explanation. Without detail explanations, it is difficult to determine productivity rates for

the Fire Inspectors.

Recommendation

1. Establish a policy that requires all time entered into Naviline to include detailed explanations of why time is being charged to the administration codes.

Additional Level of Oversight Needed

Plans Examiners and Engineers report directly to the Director of Development Services. At this time, there is not an assigned supervisor for daily operations. Due to other responsibilities of the Director, we do not believe he can oversee the daily operations of 14 plans examination and engineering employees in addition to his 6 current direct reports units at the level required.

Recommendation

1. Consider creating a reporting level in between staff and upper management.

Fire Inspector Time Recording is Fractured

The Fire Inspectors charge time in Naviline and on an Excel spreadsheet. Time reported in Naviline only captures time actually spent with the customer. Administration time spent and travel time to customers is not logged in Naviline. Further, the time report in Excel is cumbersome and not easily analyzed. We found that hours are sometimes entered on the Daily Report and not entered on Naviline. Using one system would reduce the time needed to record daily activities, help to establish utilization rates for the Fire Inspectors and Plan Examiners, and allow better management tracking of time.

Recommendation

1. Consider a customization to Naviline (or other similar application) where all time, administration and travel, could be recorded.

Fire Inspector Overtime Charges Not Analyzed

Fire Prevention management has not been performing a review of overtime hour usage. Without proper review and management of overtime costs, Fire Prevention will not know if they are covering overtime costs with fees charged for that purpose.

Recommendation

1. An overtime approval form should accompany each overtime charge and encompass customer approval, reason for

overtime needed, and the name of the inspector requesting the overtime.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Management Response

CLARK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING & FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU
DRAFT AUDIT RESPONSES By Ronald L. Lynn, Director/Building & Fire Official

Finding Reference 1

The department agrees that many policies and procedures have been established, but unfortunately they were unable to be processed through the Standard Operating Procedures Committee of 1908. Further, many of the old policies became out-of-date through ensuing code changes and the evolution of standards. 16 policies and procedures have been recently updated and as of 10/09/13 the union has agreed to establish a special committee to address the Fire Prevention Bureau submittals. Manager response and action plans, as I have said, we have updated 16 of them, and as of 10/09/13 the union has agreed to establish a special committee to address the Fire Prevention Bureau submittals.

The department will continue to develop new "how-to" guides, procedures, processes and technical guidelines, and inspection checklists which will be actively distributed with accompanied training to all the inspectors as 1908 provides appropriate concurrence. As updates are provided, it is a requirement that the Director, the Senior Deputy Fire Chief, the lead author of the document, and the Deputy Fire Marshals all sign so that there is documented concurrence.

Management action due date – it is now.

Finding Reference 2

Management agrees with the recommendation and will move forward with developing a plan of action for consideration by the Position Review Committee (PRC). Currently, the Fire Protection Engineers, Chemical Engineer and the Fire Plans Checkers self monitor their individual plan bins and check the generic plans bins. Given the 3.5 day Audit finding and recommendation the Fire Plans Check Group is instructed to check both Plan bins simultaneously. Plans Exam assignments should be controlled.

Finding Reference 3

This will be undertaken, and the due date will be May 1, 2014.

Finding Reference 4

This is being undertaken now. Considerable staff and time is being devoted not only to the copulation of data, but also in establishing a program which allows for an easily searchable data base.

Finding Reference 5

Upon the completion of item 4, each structure in Clark County will be assigned a risk component. The higher the risk, the more intense the inspection process up to yearly.

Finding Reference 6

Management agrees with the finding and recommendation. High-Rise building checklists are being created to assist the Fire Inspectors with inspections of High-Rise buildings. These checklists will be created from the Occupancy inspection checklists under construction now for Selectron implementation.

100 FPB Inspector checklists have been developed and are being integrated into our field automated entry system (Selectron). It can be foreseen that additional checklists will be developed as the dynamics of the environment change.

Finding Reference 7

Implementation of field devices allowing access to programs to document inspections in the field is underway. The hand-held devices are being rolled out in late October-early November 2013 with air cards installed. Air cards will not be activated until County IT establishes access protocols.

Finding Reference 8

As part of the FPB Transition, training has become an ongoing focal point of the FPB. Since June 18th, the FPB has provided the following training sessions to the FPB employees:

NFPA 17A – Standard for Wet Chemical Extinguishing Systems, NFPA 72 – National Fire Alarm Code, and NFPA 10 – Standard on Portable Fire Extinguishers – June 18th & 19th,

Inspection of Commercial Cooking Equipment Hoods & Ducts & Fire Suppression – August 21st through Fire Protection Association of Nevada,

Asbestos Abatement and FPB Inspections – August 29th,

Hydrant Flow Test for Sprinkler Design – September 4th, 10th, and October 2nd, and

Fire Pump Inspection and Testing – October 16, 23rd.

Additional training is scheduled for the remainder of 2013 to include a repeat of the Commercial Cooking Fire Suppression Systems, Plastic Pipe Systems for Automatic Sprinkler Systems and Dry Pipe Testing & Commissioning and Maintenance.

Finally, the FPB has a schedule of in house training for all of 2014:

NFPA 13D & 13R System Inspections,

Required Permits Breakdown,

Sprinkler and Alarm Systems Monitoring,

Fire Alarm Systems Acceptance Inspections,

Fire Performers and Stage Flame Effects,

Outdoor Fireworks Display Inspections,

Group Home Inspections,

Hydrant Flow Testing for Sprinkler System Design,

Fire Pump Inspection and Testing,

Dry Pipe Systems Inspections and Testing, and

Commercial Cooking Fire Suppression System Inspections.

Finding Reference 9

Development of a Policy and Procedure requiring more detailed information to be entered into Naviline is underway. The new Policy and Procedure will be utilized to instruct Fire Protection Engineers, Chemical Engineer, Fire Plans Checkers, and Fire Inspectors of the requirement for more detailed recording of time spent on Administrative duties and responsibilities.

Finding Reference 10

This will be put in the new budget cycle as part of proposed reorganization of the division. This includes the addition of an Assistant Chief for Plans Exam and another Deputy Fire Marshal for inspections.

Concur with Item 12.

An assessment indicates we are not covering our costs for overtime. There exists an overtime approval form. However, there this requires the review of individual documents rather than a report format. While modifications to the form are usually accomplished, it will constitute another step to coordinate with KRONOS as well as the County for emergency situations.