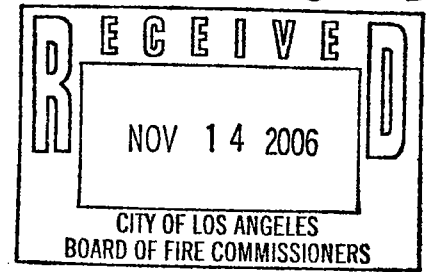


LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



BFC 06-105

WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
FIRE CHIEF



October 17, 2006

TO: The Honorable Board of Fire Commissioners
City of Los Angeles

FROM: William R. Bamattre, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR METHANE GAS DETECTION SYSTEMS
FEES FOR PLAN CHECK, INSPECTION, AND CERTIFICATION

SUMMARY

Since the early 1990's, the Fire Department has spent thousands of staff hours performing plan check and final acceptance tests for methane gas detection systems without reimbursement. To correct this inequity, an amendment to the Fire Code and Chief's Regulation No. 4 requirements will be necessary to recover future costs for our services.

In addition, these amendments will also address the lack of tracking occupancies with methane detection systems and the absence of a certification process for personnel in the business of servicing and testing these systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are submitted to your Honorable Board to be approved for consideration and public hearing. As required by Fire Code provisions that allow the Fire Commission to establish these fees, these recommendations have been reviewed by the City Administrative Officer and have received their concurrence:

1. Approve the findings in support of the ordinance for collecting fees for methane detection systems.

2. Approve the setting of a hearing for proposed fees, itemized below:
 - a. Methane Gas Detection System plan check
 - b. Methane Gas Detection System final acceptance inspection

- c. Certification of Methane Detection System testers (under the Chief's Regulation No. 4 Program)
3. Direct the Board's Executive Assistant to publish the required notices of a public hearing on the proposed fee enactment at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Fire Commission.

Upon approval of the proposed fees, it is recommended that the Commission:

1. Request that the City Attorney review the proposed changes to the Municipal Code and draft an ordinance to include provisions for the establishment and yearly review of fees for Methane Detection Systems, similar to the current provisions under 57.04.12c (Attachment 1).
2. Direct that the attached Resolution (Attachment 2) adjusting the Commission controlled fees as detailed in this report be adopted after the required public hearing, and notice of this action be transmitted to the Mayor and Council at the conclusion of the public hearing.

FINDINGS

Ordinance No. 175790 requires buildings within the City to have a methane mitigation system in the Methane Zone and Methane Buffer Zone. The Fire Department and the Department of Building and Safety are the enforcing authority for the methane mitigation system requirements.

The Department of Building and Safety charges fees for installing methane detection systems (building, electrical, mechanical, and grading permits). The Fire Department has not collected any fees but has performed the following since the early 1990's: approving and determining the compatibility of component parts of the methane detection system; ensuring the proper operation of the entire system, including the correct placement of devices; and overseeing the maintenance and testing of the systems.

The Fire Department achieves the above through plan checking and final acceptance testing of the system that includes the methane sensors and control panel, alarms, strobes, back-up emergency power, and methane ventilation system.

Once these systems are installed, they are required to be calibrated on a periodic basis with a certification inspection for the entire system conducted annually. Since there is no effective record-keeping system to track these occupancies, it is uncertain whether the required tests are being performed.

Personnel responsible for testing and servicing methane detection systems are currently not required to meet a minimum competency requirement. It is essential that personnel with such a critical function, the life safety of the occupants of a building, be certified. The Fire Department could perform these certifications by implementing the requirements in Division 6 Certificate of Fitness, a system that is already in place to test and certify personnel in the business of testing and servicing fire and life safety systems. This Program would not only ensure that the testers are certified but enable us to track occupancies with methane detection systems.

To recover the costs for our services, we have proposed two separate fees; first, the certification of testers under Division 6 Certificate of Fitness; and secondly, methane system plan check and final acceptance inspection. The time necessary for documentation and certifying testers through the written, oral, and practical exam would take approximately two hours for each phase for a total of six hours. The plan-check review takes approximately two hours while the final field acceptance tests would add another two hours.

The fees collected for these services depend on the number of methane gas detection systems being installed and the number of methane technicians certifying monthly. Currently, there are approximately ten methane system plans that are being submitted monthly for plan check. Using the current hourly rate of \$135 per hour, this amounts to an annual collection of \$64,000 (120 yearly x \$540 per plan check). A conservative estimate of approximately four methane technicians certified each month would amount to \$38,880 (48 yearly x \$810 per certification). Therefore, the total revenue is estimated to be \$102,880 for one year.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of this ordinance is critical in continuing the fire/life safety mission of the Fire Department and is consistent with existing City policies of recovering the total cost of providing specialized services.

Respectfully submitted,



WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
Fire Chief

WRB:lkf:Methane Ordinance Fire Commission Bd Ltr

Attachments

October 17, 2006

L. A. Fire Code Revisions For Methane Mitigation Regulations

57.01.35 B.

Add No. 8 to read:

8. Gas Detection System.

57.02.02.

Add definition to read:

Gas Detection System – shall mean one or more electrical devices that measures gas concentration and communicates the information to the occupants and or building management with audible and visual signals.

57.06.15 A.

Add "No. 7" to read:

7. Gas Detection System.

57.05.20 A.

Add "No. 19" to read:

19. Gas Detection System.

57.05.31 A.

Add "No. 20" to read:

20. Gas Detection System.

57.06.01.

Add "G" to read:

G. No person shall, without a valid Certificate of Fitness as required by this article, test or certify any gas detection system.

D R A F T

RESOLUTION NO. ____

WHEREAS, Section 57.04.12.C. of the Los Angeles Municipal Code authorizes the Board of Fire Commissioners to determine on a regular basis, the schedule of applicable charges necessary to recover City costs; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles Fire Department, Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety, in the course of business provides Methane Gas Detection System plan check, inspection, and fire code review services free of charge; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles Fire Department, Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety, will be providing certification of methane detection system testers; and

WHEREAS, the Fire Department finds the need to establish fees for these services; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners at its meeting of _____, 2006 considered the proposed fees; and may request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to include provisions for the establishment and yearly review of these proposed fees; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners will conduct a public hearing on Tuesday, _____, 2006, 3:00 p.m. at 200 N. Main Street, Fire Commissioners Meeting Room 1820, City Hall East, to further consider and take action in the matter of said proposed fees.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT BE RESOLVED, that at a Public Hearing on _____th of 2006, the BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS will consider and take further action in the matter of Methane Detection System fees; and if said fees are approved by the majority of the Board, it will transmit the recommendation to the Mayor and Council for consideration.

Adopted this ____th day of _____, 2006

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

DALILA T. SOTELO, President

Attest: _____
BLANCA GOMEZ-REVELLES
Commission Executive Assistant