

What We Heard – Fire Inspection Process & Fees

Between late 2022 and early 2025, Administration received several comments regarding Edmonton Fire Rescue Services (EFRS) consultation requirements from business licence applicants. These comments were gathered through customer satisfaction surveys that are sent out with every new business licence issued. While some customers reported positive experiences with EFRS staff and found the inspections helpful, the majority of feedback highlighted areas where the current process may benefit from review and refinement.

Key Themes Identified:

1. Perceived Redundancy and Double Fees

A common concern is the perception of being charged twice for fire inspections—once during the commercial development/building permit stage and again during the business licensing process. Several applicants noted confusion as to why a second fee is required when a fire inspection had already occurred and was considered sufficient by inspectors at that time.

2. Mismatch Between Risk Level and Fee Charged

Some applicants questioned why high-risk inspection fees were being applied to low-risk or minimal-use spaces such as small offices, empty parking lots or spaces with no open flame, gas or hazardous materials. Feedback suggests that a more tailored, risk-based approach may better reflect the actual level of inspection required.

3. Inspection Timing and Delays

While City processes were generally praised for efficiency, some delays in scheduling fire inspections led to frustration, especially when businesses were otherwise ready to open. Suggestions were made for exploring alternatives in low-risk scenarios, such as digital reviews of emergency plans and photos, to help expedite the licensing process.

4. Responsibility and Scope Clarity

Some licence holders expressed concern about being held responsible for fire safety issues that fall under the purview of property owners or building management, such as common-area fire extinguishers or base-building compliance.

5. Appreciation for Inspector Professionalism

Attachment 5

Despite concerns about process and cost, a few submissions positively highlighted the professionalism and helpfulness of fire inspectors during site visits.

Summary

Feedback points to a need for greater clarity and alignment between fire inspection requirements, fee application and business context. While safety remains a top priority, many applicants expressed frustration over perceived duplication of fire safety issues between the inspections undertaken through the Safety Codes Permits and Inspection team and those undertaken by EFRS, the lack of differentiation between low- and high-risk settings and unclear responsibilities. At the same time, the value of knowledgeable and professional inspectors was acknowledged and appreciated by several respondents.