



Assistant Commissioner
Office of School Governance, Policy, and Religious and Independent Schools
Room 1075 Education Building Annex
89 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12234
Tel: (518) 474-7206
Christina.Coughlin@nysed.gov

September 19, 2018

Dear Religious and Independent School Leaders;

You are receiving this notice as a reminder of your obligation under Education Law Section 807-a to have your facility inspected for fire safety annually and file a report of inspection with the Commissioner of Education. This requirement does not apply to religious and independent schools in the cities of New York (five boroughs), Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers and for any school outside of these areas that has an enrollment totaling under 25 students.

If you have already obtained your inspection and submitted the report, thank you for your efforts. If your inspection has not yet been completed, you must arrange to do so prior to December 1st and the inspection report must be filed with the Commissioner prior to December 16th. This year, the State Office of Religious and Independent Schools (SORIS) will collect the Fire Safety Reports that are submitted by the religious and independent school leaders through an online secure portal. A hard copy should be kept at the school and made readily available to relevant officials, if requested. Additional information including directions, sign-in information and a webinar on how to use the online tool will be provided in the coming weeks. Paper copies will still be accepted, however to streamline the process we encourage schools to submit via the portal.

We strongly recommend that code enforcement officials, certified by the Department of State, be retained to perform these inspections. In accordance with Education Law 807-a, the following methods, or any combination of such methods, must be used to conduct a fire inspection:

- **Requesting inspection by the county fire coordinator**, or officer performing the powers and duties of a county fire coordinator pursuant to a local law of the county in which the building is located;
- **Requesting inspection by the fire department** of any city, town, village, or fire district in which the building is located;
- **Requesting inspection by a fire corporation** which is subject to the provisions of section 1402 of the not-for-profit corporation law, if such building is located within the area described in the certificate of incorporation of any such corporation;
- **Employing or contracting persons** who, in the judgement of the school authorities, are qualified to make such inspection, or any phase thereof.

School leaders are responsible to approve these inspections and for data entry of the inspection report into the portal. The inspector's contact information must also be provided. In the event that questions arise, and we need to contact the inspector.

The State Education Department and the Department of State have developed the inspection manual and reporting document. These documents may be found on the State Education Department's Office of Facilities Planning website at:

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/FireSafety/fire_safety_report_homepage.html.

Please ensure the *Non-Public* School fire safety manual and fire safety report are used to inspect Facilities. If hard copies of the report are being submitted, please send to:

New York State Education Department
State Office of Religious and Independent Schools
89 Washington Avenue, Room 1078 EBA
Albany, NY 12234

Please remember this is an annual requirement, and it is intended to ensure all schools are operated and maintained in a safe and healthy manner for the benefit of the children and staff in your community.

Questions about the inspection requirements may be directed to SORIS at SORIS@nysed.gov. Questions about required code sections or reporting forms may be directed to the Office of Facilities Planning at (518) 474-3906 or Firesafety@nysed.gov.

Thank you for your continued support and hard work to keep students safe.

Sincerely,



Christina E. Coughlin
Assistant Commissioner,
Office of School Governance, Policy
and Religious and Independent Schools