

TEXARKANA, TEXAS FIRE DEPARTMENT

FIRE CODE INFORMATION SHEET

FIRE LANES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

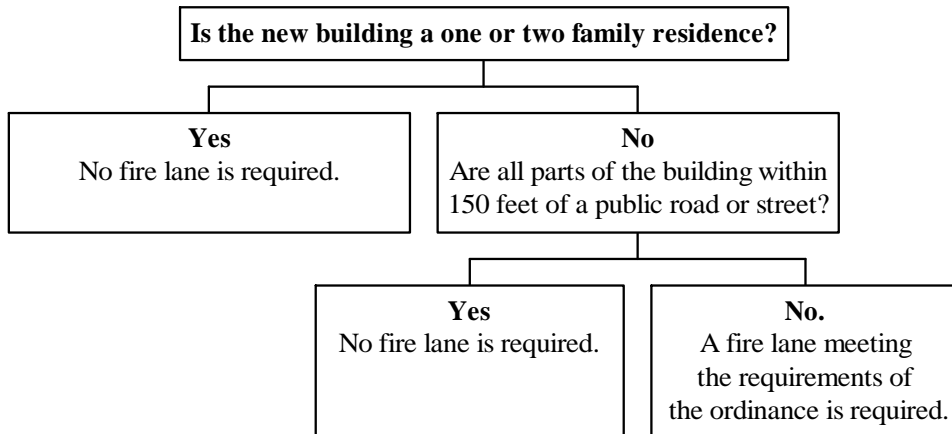
When an emergency occurs, it is important that firefighters and their equipment have rapid and unimpeded access to an emergency scene. Fire apparatus must be able to reach to the scene. Firefighters need space to stretch hose lines, set-up pumps, raise ladders, and take other actions necessary to control a fire or other emergency. To insure that firefighters have this needed access, the City of Texarkana, Texas has adopted a fire lane ordinance. This ordinance requires designated and marked fire lanes at most commercial occupancies.

Why are fire lanes required?

As stated above, firefighters need rapid and unimpeded access to a fire or other emergency scene. The more rapidly firefighters can access an emergency scene, the more likely they are to control the emergency. It is important that this access be reasonably close to the fire building. This is particularly true in commercial buildings. When compared to one and two family residences, commercial buildings tend to be larger, to have significantly more parking and traffic around them, and to be occupied by more people resulting in a greater life hazard. Pre-connected hose lines on pumpers save precious seconds in attacking a fire, but they are limited to lengths that can be handled by firefighters on the first arriving engine. Equipment can be carried from trucks to the fire scene over any distance, but longer distances result in delays. More personnel are also needed to transport equipment over longer distances. For these reasons, the distance from the street or fire lane to a building must be limited.

How do I determine if a fire lane is required for my building?

To determine if a fire lane is required, you must consider both the occupancy type and the distance from the road. Fire lanes are not required for one or two family residences. They may be required on all other occupancies, dependent upon the distance to the road. If all parts of a building are within 150 feet of a public street or road, no fire lane is required. If all or portions of a building are more than 150 feet from a public street or road, a fire lane is required.



For more information,
please contact:

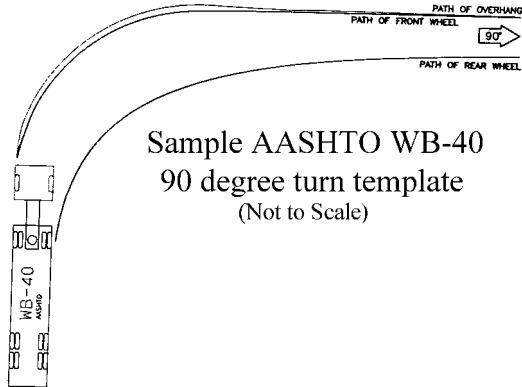
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Do these requirements apply to new or existing buildings?

These requirements apply to buildings built after the effective date of the current fire lane ordinance. The current ordinance is # 141-2000, approved by the City Council on June 24, 2000. Older buildings may or may not be required to have fire lanes, based on the requirements of the ordinance that was in effect at the time the building was constructed. For questions on older buildings, please consult the Fire Prevention Division.

What are the physical requirements and dimensions for a fire lane?



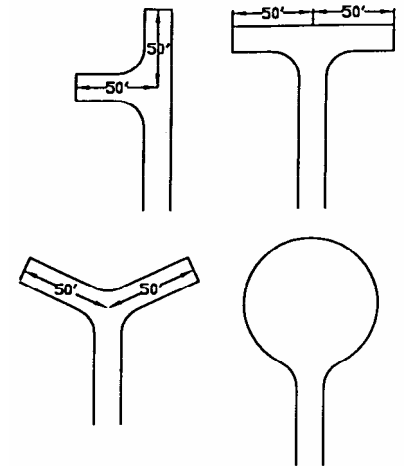
The minimum width of a fire lane is 20 feet. If there is any overhead obstruction in a fire lane, it must have a minimum clearance of 13 feet, 6 inches. All curves or turns in a fire lane must meet minimum turning radius requirements. Rather than specifying a minimum inside or outside turn radius, the required turning radii in the ordinance are linked to the minimum turning radii of an AASHTO WB-40 vehicle. This allows the site designer to consider all aspects that affect turning radius, including roadway width, inside radius, and outside radius when designing the fire lane. A sample of a 90° turn template is shown to the left. Your site design engineer should have access to the required templates.

What type of surface is allowed in a fire lane?

Designated fire lanes must have a concrete, asphalt or gravel surface; be substantial enough to support fire department apparatus; and must remain structurally unaffected by bad weather. The design engineer or architect shall issue a certificate to certify that the fire lane complies with this requirement.

Are dead-end fire lanes allowed?

Yes, with certain limitations. A dead-end fire lane is a lane that does not connect to another fire lane or public street. All traffic that enters a dead-end must exit by the same path it entered. The dead-end portion of a fire lane is allowed to be up to 150 feet in length. If a dead-end lane exceeds 150 feet, an acceptable turn-around for fire apparatus must be provided at the end of the lane. Some examples of acceptable turn-arounds are shown in the diagram at right. Other designs may be acceptable if approved by the fire chief. All turn-arounds must meet the dimensional requirements of other portions of the fire lane; i.e., width of 20 feet, overhead clearance of 13' 6", and turning radii in accordance with the WB-40 vehicle template discussed above.



How must a fire lane be marked?

On a paved surface, fire lane markings must appear on the pavement. A 6" red stripe must be used to form a perimeter stripe on the fire lane. If there is a curb, the entire curb must be painted red. The printed legend "NO PARKING FIRE LANE" must appear at intervals of no more than 50 feet, painted on the curb or stripe as appropriate. The legend must be painted in white letters at least 4" in height. An acceptable alternative to the painted legends is the placement of metal signs on posts, bearing the legend, and spaced no more than 50 feet apart. Fire lane markings must appear on both sides of the lane.

Are there any alternatives to the requirements of this ordinance?

This ordinance is designed to be as flexible as possible and still meet the need of fire department access to buildings. If you have an alternative proposal that allows for adequate access but falls short of some technical requirements, approval may be possible. Submit your proposal with justification to the Fire Prevention Division for consideration. Alternatives may be approved by the fire chief if, in his opinion, the alternative plan allows for adequate access to the building in question and the deviations from the ordinance requirements are justified by site considerations.