Community Development Department
Building Division
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Helena Fire Department
300 Neill Avenue
Helena, MT 59623
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helenamt.gov

Date: Updated June 11, 2026

From: Chuck Nunley, Chief Building Official Lou Antonick, Fire Marshal

Fire and Life Safety Protection System Plan Review Policy

Effective Date: Immediately

Applicability: All fire protection and life safety systems listed in the 2021 International Fire Code (IFC) or National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard will require a separate permit:

- Fire Alarm Systems– full or partial (including Carbon Monoxide, etc.)
- Fire Sprinkler Systems, 13, 13D or 13R, including deluge, etc.
- Fire Suppression Systems – Clean agent (IFC Chapter 24 requirements)
- Fire Extinguishing Systems in Commercial Kitchens with a Type 1 Hood.
- And any other fire protection system listed in any other applicable code or standard.

Prior to installation of any fire and life safety protection system on new construction, tenant fit out, remodel or system replacement project in the City of Helena, permits shall first be obtained from the Building Division. All plans and documents must be designed according to IFC and NFPA standards. Shop drawings/working plans must be designed by a qualified professional who is licensed with the National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET) as level 3 or higher and is qualified in the system being designed for all new or altered systems of 6 or more devices. The designers' qualifications shall be submitted with the permit application. This policy does not apply to work created by or correcting deficiencies because of a required inspection of the system by licensed contractors.

The City of Helena requires a third-party review for all fire sprinklers and fire alarm systems that contain or alters 20 or more devices. The twenty-plus devices include panels, manual pull stations, notification and detection devices, sprinkler heads, etc. If the new or altered system contains between 6 and 19 devices, plans will not be required to have a third-party review but must be submitted directly to the Building Department for review, approval and permits. New or altered systems with 1-5 devices will not require qualified design, shop drawings or working plans. Permit submission must include a detailed scope of work, equipment cut sheets and design parameters. All other fire suppression, extinguishing and other fire protection systems will require third-party review regardless of the number of devices.

Fire protection plans shall be submitted to a third-party review agency or Helena Building Division within 30 days of building permit issuance. It is strongly recommended to submit the fire protection plans at the same time as the building permit. A delay in submitting this deferred submittal may result in delayed building final inspections. NO installation work shall occur on any fire protection system without the proper permit first being obtained.

The City of Helena does not have a preference of third-party review individuals or companies, but they must be approved by the city prior to using. The third-party review must be complete and include a summary, all codes and standards siting, along with any technical information for the installation of the system. *The same firm or individual who designed the system cannot perform the third-party review.*

Following the completed and approved third-party review, plans shall be submitted electronically to the Building Division through Civic Access at https://www.helenamt.gov/Business/Civic-Access. Once plans have been reviewed, approved and paid for, the approved plans and documents will be to the Contractor on Civic Access. A complete set of approved permit documents—including the permit-stamped plans, the permit, all third-party review comments, and any permit comments—shall be on the project site prior to beginning system installation.

At the conclusion of the installation and final inspection and testing, a set of 'as-built' plans shall be placed at or near the fire alarm control panel or sprinkler riser room in a document box for emergency personnel and system inspections. Final inspection and testing will not be complete unless the approved plans, permit and review comments are on site. Every device will be tested and inspected.

Questions about this policy shall be directed to Fire Marshal, Lou Antonick at lantonick@helenamt.gov .