

Fire Inspections on Commercial Farms in New Jersey

Information received from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs - Divisions of Fire Safety and Codes & Standards is summarized below to provide guidance to the agricultural community regarding the Uniform Fire Safety Act and accompanying Fire Code.

- “Commercial Farm” is defined in accordance with the Right-to-Farm Act.
- We have been informed by the Division of Fire Safety and Codes and Standards that the current focus of fire safety concern is farm labor housing.
- Essential safeguards and limits on occupancy will be required to allow buildings without a valid Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for a housing use to continue to be occupied until after the current growing season.
- Sufficient time (i.e. 180 days) will be provided to abate other violations.
- Farm equipment is NOT under the provisions of the Fire Code.
- Either smoke alarms or hard wired interconnected smoke detectors will be required depending on the layout of the structure. Emergency lighting, exit signs and discharge lighting may also be required depending on building size and layout.
- If any fuel burning equipment is present, carbon monoxide alarms will be required.
- All other buildings that are located on a “commercial farm”, except for owner-occupied one and two-family dwellings, must be inspected and comply with all applicable provisions of the Fire Code.
- If the building was built prior to 1977 and does not possess a valid CO issued under the Uniform Construction Code (UCC), then it must comply with Subchapter 4 Retrofit Code requirements under the Uniform Fire Code.
- Buildings built under the UCC (after 1977) must possess a valid CO for the use that they are being utilized for.
- Structures built after 1977 that do not possess a valid CO or possess a CO for a use that is different than the current use, will be referred to the local Construction Official for follow up.
- Fire Officials will make sure that imminent hazards such as locked doors and lack of smoke alarms are corrected immediately.
- At a recent Fire Inspector training we were told that Inspectors will also inspect for:
 - Hazardous conditions from defective or improperly used or installed wiring, equipment or appliances.
 - Fuel dispensing and tank/container storage.
 - Vacant buildings that are unsecure or falling down.
 - Work or systems without proper permits.
 - Appropriate storage in barns and greenhouses.
 - Cutting/welding areas