



## **BUILDING AND FIRE SAFETY SERVICES CLIENT ASSISTANCE MEMO**

### **FIRE LANES**

#### **Fire Lanes**

Rapid fire department access to buildings is critical to the safe and effective provision of emergency services. For this reason, the International Fire Code as referenced in the Gig Harbor Municipal Code requires that buildings and structures be provided with clear, identified fire department access roads, or "Fire Lanes".

#### **Where Required**

Fire lanes must be provided whenever any point of the first floor of a building or structure is located further than 150 feet from fire department vehicle access as measured by an approved route around the perimeter of the building. More than one fire lane may be required when access by a single road might be impaired by congestion, terrain, climatic condition or other factor that could limit access.

#### **Clear Width**

The required clear width of the drivable surface of fire lanes is 20 feet. In order to assure unobstructed access, roadways less than 32 feet are required to be marked and signed on one side and roadways less than 26 feet shall be marked and signed on both sides.

#### **Drivable Surface**

The drivable surface of fire lanes must, at a minimum, be designed to support the weight of a fire truck. In the City of Gig Harbor, that weight is 70,000# gross axle weight. The surface must be passable in all weather conditions (i.e. paved or gravel). Where impervious surface or other restrictions apply, alternate surfaces such as "grasscrete" or similar treatments may be considered by the Fire Marshal on a case-by-case basis. All alternate surfaces must have prior approval by the Fire Marshal. The Operations and Engineering Division of the City's Community Development Department may have additional roadway design requirements. For more information contact them at 253.858.6170.

#### **Fire Lane Identification**

Because fire lanes must be kept clear at all times, their location must be clearly identified. The City of Gig Harbor requires that fire lanes be identified with a combination of curb or roadway edge painting and signage. Alternate methods may be approved when in the opinion of the Fire Marshal the proposed method of identification ensures against obstruction. The Fire Marshal retains the right to revoke approval of alternate methods where obstruction becomes a problem.

#### **Fire Lane Painting**

When standing curbs are installed along fire lanes, both the vertical and horizontal planes of the curb must be painted red for the entire length of the fire lane. The words "NO PARKING – FIRE LANE" must be stenciled in white on the vertical surface in at least 3-inch tall letters, at no more than 30-foot intervals.

Where the roadway has rolled curbs or no curbs, painting and stenciling must be on the pavement surface. 10-inch white lettering reading "NO PARKING – FIRE LANE" must be placed against a red background with spacing of not more than 60 feet. Again, the painting must be continuous for the entire length of the fire lane.

### **Fire Lane Signs**

Fire lane signs must comply with the specifications of the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices*. In general, fire lane signs must be no less than 12" wide by 18" high. They must have a reflectorized background with red lettering reading "NO PARKING – FIRE LANE". Each sign must include a directional arrow indicating the direction of the fire lane in relation to the sign.

Signs must be spaced at no more than 120 feet apart and must be mounted 7 feet above the driving surface when on public rights of way, 5 to 7 feet on private development, and be situated parallel to the roadway. Additional signs are required when curves, hills, corners or other conditions obstruct the line of sight. Signs must not be obstructed by landscaping or by other means.

### **Security Gates**

The International Fire Code requires that fire lanes must be kept unobstructed at all times. However, it is recognized that often site security requires that gates be provided to control public access to a site. Security gates may be installed only with prior written approval of the Fire Marshal.



Where a gate is used to control access to a primary fire lane, the gate must be automatic and must be provided with an Opticom controller and default to open in the event of a power outage.

Gates must be substantially built and either swinging or vertically lifting with a counter balance. The Fire Marshal may approve other gates however, unshielded chains and cables pose a risk of injury and will not be approved. Gates must be of a color approved by the Fire Marshal and must be provided with reflective markers.

Gates installed on fire lanes providing secondary access must be provided with a Knox lock or Knox box containing a key, combination or access code for unlocking the gate.

### **Maintenance**

Painting and signs must be installed and maintained at the expense of the property owners abutting required access easements or the property owner(s) upon whose property the painting and signs are installed.

### **Need More Information?**

For more information on fire lane requirements contact the City of Gig Harbor, Community Development Department at 253.851.6170.