

Texas State Fire Marshal's Office

# State Building Inspections Annual Report

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December 2022



**TDI** | Texas Department  
of Insurance





# State Building Inspections Annual Report

Fiscal year 2022

by the

**Texas State Fire Marshal's Office**

Submitted December 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Orlando P. Hernandez".

Orlando P. Hernandez  
State Fire Marshal  
Texas Department of Insurance

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# Overview

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Under [Texas Government Code 417.0082](#), the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) is the authority having jurisdiction for fire hazards in any state owned or state leased building.

SFMO must also submit an annual report on the inspection findings to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house, and appropriate standing committees of the legislature.

SFMO also shares the contents of this report with the agencies mentioned. After each facility was inspected, SFMO shared the report for that facility with the agency occupying that building, noting all violations and potential dangers.

## Background

SFMO has 15 fire inspectors, with one inspector dedicated to the Capitol Complex, to conduct life safety inspections of state-owned and state-leased buildings. Building inspections are conducted on a risk-analysis basis in consultation with the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) and the State Office of Risk Management.

SFMO also:

- Works with state agencies to prioritize inspections and identify high-risk deficiencies.
- Performs fee-based, fireworks retail site, ammonium nitrate facility, and complaint inspections to make sure they are meeting all code requirements.

## Operational goals

- Verify that fire drills occur regularly at state-operated facilities.
- Continue requesting building and construction project plans and provide peer reviews of the plans.
- Identify contacts for all state agencies to help facilitate corrections in state-leased buildings.
- Conduct inspections:
  - Annually for:
    - Areas that provide residential and patient care, such as state-supported living centers and state hospitals.
    - Ammonium nitrate storage facilities.
  - Every two years for:
    - Buildings that are seven stories or higher.
    - All state criminal justice facilities.
  - Every three to five years for other state-owned and leased facilities.
  - More frequently than scheduled for high-risk facilities where fire protection systems aren't maintained or in service.

## Key findings and projects



### Key inspection violations

Many violations noted in this report have existed for years. Agencies and other entities said a lack of funding affects their ability to correct violations such as:

- Fire alarm, fire sprinkler, portable fire extinguishers, and commercial kitchen suppression systems not maintained to fire code.
- New construction projects and building purchases not reported to SFMO.
- Extension cords and power strips used as permanent electrical wiring.
- Unprotected openings in firewalls and smoke barriers.
- Emergency lights and lighted exit signs not maintained.

### SFMO projects

- At the request of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), SFMO began inspecting TDCJ facilities to establish a baseline for the operational state of fire protection systems. Inspections also cover whether the facility lacks code-required fire protection systems. Inspections began in January 2022 and will continue into fiscal year 2023.
- Correctional unit inspections for “Operation Lone Star” in South Texas. This includes working with TDCJ, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, and local contractors to ensure facilities are code compliant.
- Working with Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to inspect residences before leasing the residence for children without placement. This involves a quick turnaround to inspect and ensure the fire and life safety conditions are met while the children are in these residences. This allows DFPS to properly house children without resorting to using office buildings.
- Several school districts requested inspections to verify their district is fire and life safety code compliant. This involves staff inspecting several large school districts across Texas.
- Identified numerous buildings leased by several state agencies outside of those contracted by TFC. This results from the inspectors working closely with state agencies to identify all properties the state owns or leases.



# State inspection reports

# Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)



## Violations identified

- Most fire alarm systems weren't present or functioning properly.
- Most kitchen hood suppression systems weren't maintained or inspected. SFMO developed a temporary fire watch policy for kitchen staff to keep kitchens open.
- Required gas pipeline pressure tests weren't performed.
- Most facilities lacked required annual inspection, testing, and maintenance of the:
  - Fire sprinkler systems.
  - Standpipe systems.
  - Collapsible hose systems.
  - Fire doors.
  - Fire and smoke dampers.
  - Fire department connections.
- Buildings lacked:
  - Portable fire extinguishers.
  - Required smoke detection in inmate sleeping areas.
  - Code-required smoke evacuation systems, or they were disabled.
  - Correctly performed fire watches.
- There were electrical violations in each inspected unit. Violations included:
  - Unlabeled breaker panels.
  - Unused openings.
  - Breakers tied with copper wire.
  - Missing cover plates.
  - Extension cords used as permanent wiring.

## Improvements

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- Installed battery-operated smoke alarms in employee housing before SFMO left the facility.
- Met regularly with SFMO to discuss inspection concerns and corrections.
- Requested reviews and code requirements before renovations and new construction.
- Met with SFMO to create a timeline to get fire protection systems code compliant.
- Consulted with SFMO to ensure code compliance before correcting certain violations.

## Goals

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- Facilities where fire protection systems aren't maintained or not in service are considered high-risk and will be inspected more frequently.
- TDCJ will:
  - Use policies and procedures provided by SFMO to correct violations and achieve compliance.
  - Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections to rectify violations in a timely manner.
  - Work with SFMO to update the memorandum of understanding.
  - Report all facility fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.



# Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD)

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## Violations identified

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- Lighted exit signs didn't work when tested.
- One building lacked fire department key access box.

## Improvements

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- Requested reviews of projects and code requirements before renovations and construction.
- Corrected violations in a timely manner to make facilities safe.

## Goals

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- Facilities where fire protection systems aren't maintained or not in service are high-risk and will be inspected more frequently.
- TJJD will:
  - Use policies and procedures provided by SFMO to correct violations and achieve compliance.
  - Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
  - Report all facility fires through appropriate state procedures.
  - Maintain open communication with SFMO to ensure safety for residents and staff.

## Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) facilities

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### Violations identified

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- Portable fire extinguishers weren't mounted correctly.
- One facility kitchen lacked a UL300 hood suppression system.
- One facility lacked a water supply to the fire sprinkler system.

### Improvements

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- Installed identification placards for flammable liquids.
- Ensured that exit doors are secured correctly.
- Installed key access box systems where the local responding fire department participates in the system.
- Consulted with SFMO before installing fire walls to separate different building areas.
- Repaired emergency lighting and lighted exit signs.
- Corrected portable fire extinguisher violations.
- Corrected many electrical violations.
- Continued to resolve violations found in previous SFMO inspections.

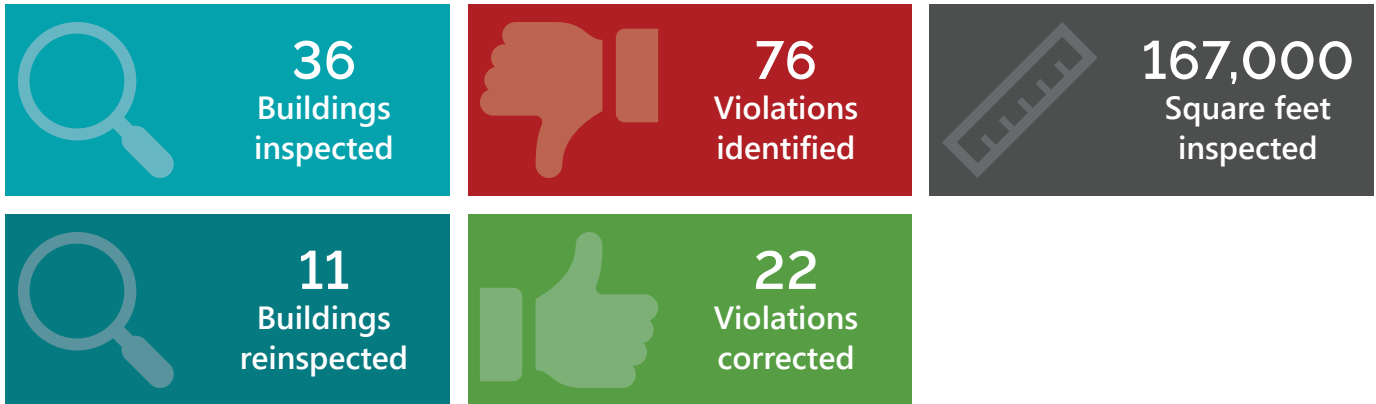
### Goals

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- Work with SFMO to continue fire and life safety inspection staff training.
- Make sure SFMO inspection reports are forwarded to personnel in each inspected facility.
- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report all facility fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.

## TxDOT rest areas and safety centers

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### Violations identified

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- Portable fire extinguishers were missing.
- Some buildings had unused openings in the breaker panel, exposed electrical wiring, and lacked circuit identification.

### Improvements

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- Installed fire department key access box systems where the local responding fire department participates in the system.
- Installed 911 address signs.
- Repaired emergency lighting units in storm shelters.

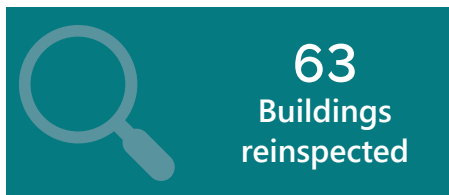
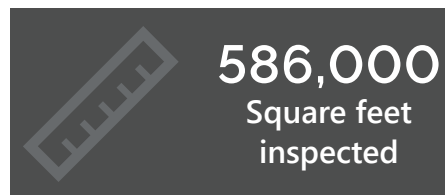
### Goals

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- Work with SFMO to continue fire and life safety inspection staff training.
- Make sure inspection reports are forwarded to personnel in inspected facilities.
- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report all facility fires through appropriate state procedures.

# Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)

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## Violations identified

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- Portable fire extinguishers weren't correctly mounted, maintained, or inspected.
- Used extension cords as permanent wiring.
- Emergency lighting and lighted exit signs didn't work.
- Some buildings had unused openings in the breaker panel, exposed electrical wiring, and lacked circuit identification.
- Blocked sprinkler heads in a forensic lab.

## Improvements

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Corrected violations as inspections were conducted.

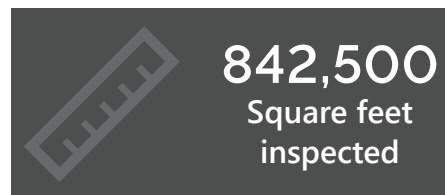
## Goals

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- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections to correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report all facility fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.

## Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD)

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### Violations identified

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- Portable fire extinguishers were either missing or weren't mounted correctly in some facilities.
- Some buildings had unused openings in the breaker panel, exposed electrical wiring, lacked circuit identification, and missing GFCI outlets.
- Two community kitchens lacked hood suppression systems.

### Improvements

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- Fixed fire extinguisher maintenance and inspection violations.
- Requested reviews and code requirements before renovations and new construction.
- Corrected the electrical violations.

### Goals

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- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report all facility fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.

## Universities and colleges

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The university inspections include state-owned university campuses, satellite campuses, health care systems, and associated university-owned facilities.



### Violations identified

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- Fire doors and door frames weren't inspected annually.
- Fire doors were damaged or missing listed labels.
- Facilities didn't have fire department access key boxes.
- Fire doors didn't close and latch properly.
- There were unsealed penetrations in IT closets and mechanical/electrical rooms.
- Many locations had student appliances plugged into surge protectors, not wall outlets.
- Too many combustibles were stored in many mechanical/electrical rooms.
- Many fire alarm and sprinkler systems were found deficient by licensed firms.
- Several universities weren't conducting inspections and relied solely on SFMO inspections to identify issues.
- Ceiling tiles weren't maintained to ensure proper and timely activation of fire alarm and sprinkler systems.
- Upper floors lacked enough secondary exits.
- Fueling sites lacked required safety signage.
- Breaker panel circuit labels weren't being maintained.
- Emergency lighting, lighted exit signs, and fire sprinkler systems lacked inspections, tests, and maintenance.
- Used extension cords as permanent wiring.
- Due to dangerous conditions, two dormitories required extensive renovations.

## Improvements

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- Some universities requested a review of code requirements before renovations and new construction.
- Universities that were inspected gave a timely response to the inspection report.
- Many universities established procedures for the SFMO to conduct a fire and life safety inspection on a building for purchase or received as a donation to ensure compliance with fire codes.

## Goals

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- Facilities where fire protection systems aren't maintained or in service are high-risk and will be inspected more frequently.
- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.
- Universities that have fire marshal offices will work with SFMO towards a proactive inspection process.
- Universities that haven't been inspected since 2017 will work with SFMO to conduct full campus inspections.

## State-supported living centers

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### Violations identified

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- Appliances such as refrigerators and microwaves were plugged into power strips.
- Ceiling tiles weren't maintained to ensure proper and timely activation of fire alarm and sprinkler systems.
- Buildings were missing portable fire extinguishers.
- Emergency lighting and lighted exit signs didn't work when tested.
- Combustible materials weren't stored in an orderly manner.

### Improvements

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Corrected several violations, including electrical violations, during the inspections.

### Goals

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- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.
- Work with the SFMO to decrease the number of false fire alarms at these facilities.



# State hospitals

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## Violations identified

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- Appliances such as refrigerators and microwaves were plugged into power strips.
- Extension cords used as permanent wiring.
- Ceiling tiles weren't maintained to ensure proper and timely activation of fire alarm and sprinkler systems.
- Portable fire extinguishers lacked an annual inspection.
- Required gas pipeline pressure tests weren't performed.

## Improvements

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- Corrected several violations during the inspections.
- Corrected noted violations in a timely manner.

## Goals

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- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections and correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.
- Work with the SFMO to decrease the number of false fire alarms at these facilities.

## Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) state-owned properties



### Violations identified

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- Buildings had fire protection systems with a yellow tag.
- Appliances were plugged into extension cords.

### Improvements

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- Improved record keeping for fire door, fire alarm, emergency lighting, lighted exit sign, and fire sprinkler system inspections.
- Kept in constant communication with SFMO on issues that arose with state-owned properties.
- Replaced clothes dryers due to fire concerns.
- Corrected many violations during inspections.

### Goals

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- Continue to work with SFMO on property inspections.
- Perform more routine fire and life safety inspections to correct violations in a timely manner.
- Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.

## TFC state-leased spaces

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### Violations identified

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- Storage was stacked too high, obstructing sprinkler heads.
- Appliances were plugged into extension cords.
- Emergency lighting and lighted exit signs didn't work.
- Ceiling tiles weren't maintained to ensure proper and timely activation of fire alarm and sprinkler systems.
- Fire alarm and fire sprinkler systems weren't maintained or inspected annually.
- Fire doors were propped open, weren't maintained, and didn't work.
- Portable fire extinguishers lacked monthly and annual inspections.

### Improvements

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- Some locations corrected violations in a timely manner and requested a reinspection.
- Better communications among TFC, lessors, lessees, and SFMO.

### Goal

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The agency and lessor need to identify who is responsible for the correction of each violation based on the lease agreement to provide for a timelier correction of noted violations.

# Texas State Preservation Board (TSPB) – Texas Capitol Complex and Texas State Cemetery

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## Violations identified

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- Fire doors didn't close and latch properly.
- Ceiling assemblies weren't maintained to ensure proper and timely activation of the fire alarm and sprinkler systems.
- Emergency lighting fixtures didn't work.
- Rack storage with solid shelving at the Capitol Furnishings Warehouse didn't meet fire sprinkler requirements. The solid shelving prevents sprinklers from controlling or extinguishing a fire on shelving.
- Stairwell lighting didn't work correctly.

## Improvements

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Corrected several violations identified in previous inspections.

## Goals

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- Continue to work closely with SFMO to ensure fire code compliance.
- Continue to work with SFMO on annual facility inspections and monthly reinspections.
- Work with SFMO to ensure it responds to inspection reports with violations.

# Ammonium Nitrate (AN) storage facilities

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## Violations identified

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- Wood storage bin walls showed signs of AN soaking into walls.
- Portable fire extinguishers weren't maintained.

## Improvements

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- Local fire departments were made aware of the facilities and provided knowledge on responding with appropriate staff, equipment, and tactics.
- Increased signage notifying emergency responders of facility risks.

## Goal

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SFMO will continue to work closely with AN facilities to ensure fire code compliance.

# Texas Historical Commission (THC)

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## Violations identified

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- Breaker panels had unused opening and lacked circuit identification.
- Portable fire extinguishers weren't mounted or lacked annual inspection.

## Improvements

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- THC staff are working to correct violations.
- The SFMO is working with THC on alternative means of compliance at several locations to ensure the safety of the occupants while maintaining the historical quality of buildings.
- THC communicates regularly with the SFMO and is eager to get the rest of their buildings inspected during FY 2023.

## Goal

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Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.

# Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Texas Workforce Solutions (TWS)

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## Violations identified

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- Fire alarm systems weren't maintained.
- Electrical appliances not being used in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.
- Portable fire extinguishers were either mounted incorrectly or not maintained in some facilities.
- Emergency lighting and lighted exit signs didn't work when tested.

## Improvements

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- Worked diligently to correct violations found in their buildings.
- Worked closely with TWS to help facilitate the correction of violations.

## Goal

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Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.

## General Land Office (GLO)

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### Violations identified

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- Emergency lighting didn't work when tested.
- Portable fire extinguishers weren't present where required or lacked an annual inspection.

### Improvements

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Communicated regularly with the SFMO and is eager to get their remaining buildings inspected during FY 2023.

### Goals

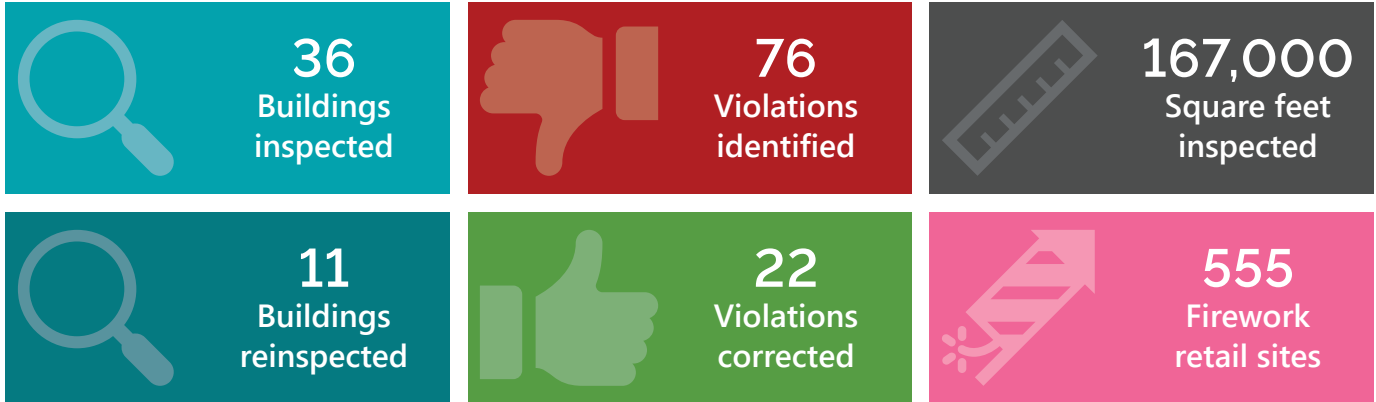
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- Report fires through appropriate state fire reporting procedures.
- Continue correcting violations.



## Fee-based / complaint / consultation / firework retail

Fire and life safety complaints about county courthouses increased in FY 2022. Many courthouses were built prior to code adoptions. Renovation funds to make county courthouses code compliant are available through the [Texas Historical Commission Courthouse Preservation program](#).



### Violations identified

- Fire alarms, fire sprinkler systems, and hood suppression systems weren't maintained.
- Portable fire extinguishers lacked annual inspection.
- Blocked exits.
- Combustible storage was kept in unapproved locations.
- Holes in fire- or smoke-rated walls, allowing smoke and flames to spread through a building.
- Electrical wiring was exposed or not installed to code specifications.
- Emergency lighting and lighted exit signs didn't work or weren't inspected monthly.

### Improvements

Most violations were corrected within 30 days, allowing facilities to remain licensed.

### Goals

SFMO will:

- Continue working with the licensing agencies to bring buildings into compliance.
- Help customers understand violations and the importance of correcting them.
- Continue to work with locations with significant violations to help them stay open.



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