



Fire Inspector I

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WRITING REPORTS AND KEEPING RECORDS

Part 2



Slide 1	Welcome to Chapter 14 Writing Reports and Keeping Records - Part 2
Slide 2	<p>In part two we will discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Inspection reports • Re-inspection reports • Writing Professional letters and emails Recording complaints • Citing codes and legislation • The freedom of information Act • Best practices for presenting evidence in legal proceedings
Slide 3	<p>By now you probably realize that as a fire inspector, documentation is one of the most vital parts of your role. The fire inspection report you will author becomes a critical component in the fire inspection process. A fire inspection report can be made up of several components as we've discussed. Sketches, diagrams, field notes, and photographs all come together to build your report.</p> <p>Your fire department or jurisdiction may have their own fire inspection process that you must follow. Frequently, these processes are supported by detailed checklists, standard report formats, and file management processes for the other supporting documentation. Whatever the format and procedures are, the report must be complete and factual.</p> <p>The following information will help you ensure your reports meet acceptable professional standards.</p>
Slide 4	<p>A professional and well written document needs to be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused and concise • Accurate in its spelling, grammar, contents and observations, • unbiased • Fact based, • In plain and understandable language, and • Consistent in appearance, format, font size, and quality of the document <p>Be specific in your observations and direction to the building owner. Clearly state “The Building Owner shall correct the following...” so that there is no mistaking both the responsibility and the action required. Your reports should follow a consistent approach. Every report, simple and complex, will benefit from a standardized approach. This will help develop your confidence and competence and avoid errors. Remember that consistency always supports compliance.</p>
Slide 5	Property information is very important, it describes the occupancy or building. This information is essential in the application of the fire code

	<p>and determining the requirements for the property. Often fire inspectors will be the people who find out that an occupancy has changed, requiring the building owner to upgrade their fire protection systems.</p> <p>Property information includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location, • The type of occupancy, • The usage of the building, • The construction type, and • Fire protection features such as a sprinkler system standpipe system or fire alarm system.
<p>Slide 6</p>	<p>Preparation for an inspection is important. The property information gives you the background and history of the building including the use and occupancy type.</p> <p>The occupancy type and use tells you a lot, including what types of fire protection systems and documentation you should be expecting to see on your inspection. It will also give you some clues to previous fire safety compliance and performance.</p> <p>The information you may examine includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing pre plan information, • Previous fire inspections completed on a that building or occupancy, • Other agency inspections of the building like building, electrical, liquor licensing, day care licensing and • Any other information that would be useful to you to complete a thorough fire inspection.
<p>Slide 7</p>	<p>Contact information is essential and can be a complex issue. Residential and commercial condominiums and strip malls will have multiple owners, multiple tenants, property management companies and governance systems. Make sure you thoroughly understand who is responsible for each element of the property.</p> <p>Ensuring you have the proper contact information for each property or singular property is vital, company name address or business name, primary contact individual and information such as phone number fax number website if applicable and email address if applicable should be noted in your written documentation.</p>

	<p>You will also have to carefully document each owner or contact’s area of responsibility for the building or properties.</p>
<p>Slide 8</p>	<p>As we have already discussed, your job as a fire inspector is to clearly and accurately document your fire inspection findings.</p> <p>Most inspectors have broad authority to bring people with them as required to do the inspection. Make sure to document everyone who was a part of the inspection, including yourself and the name, title and agency name for everyone who accompanies you.</p> <p>The property representative or owner’s name and role is really important. Make sure you properly record the date and time of the inspection. It is essential that you can accurately define the timelines of the inspection and your interaction with the file when you have to work through appeal and court processes.</p> <p>Your narrative should clearly describe why the inspection is being conducted and under what authority you are entering the building. Is this inspection part of your department's ongoing fire prevention and inspection program? Did your office receive a complaint? Was there an emergency situation? Or perhaps it was at the request of the building owner or occupant.</p> <p>As with every fire inspection conducted your report should also include the fire code deficiencies you have identified and any corrective actions required.</p>
<p>Slide 9</p>	<p>A good report will include a closing section that deals specifically with follow- up information. Typically follow-up information is specific for the building owner or occupant, and may include a reinspection date or instructions for the building owner to provide documentation within specified timelines. It will also provide your contact information and an invitation to the building owner to contact you for clarification or explanation.</p> <p>Some jurisdictions have a third party appeals process that permits building owners to appeal an inspector’s compliance requirements. It is a good idea to provide this information as part of your closing. It shows transparency to the building owner and can be an important part of building a positive relationship.</p> <p>A good closing may sound a little like this: Thank you for your assistance during the fire inspection at your building. If you have any questions or concerns related to this inspection, please do</p>

	<p>not hesitate to phone me at...(pause) and the number You can also email me at fireinspector@anywhere.com.</p> <p>Respectfully, your name and signature.</p>
<p>Slide 10</p>	<p>Reinspection’s are generally focussed on the deficiencies that you identified in the initial inspection. While you do not have to reinspect the entire building you should remain alert to other issues or possible deterioration of building conditions.</p> <p>Documentation remains an important focus for the reinspection. You will need to document and fill out a new report reflecting the status of the identified deficiencies and any new observations you make.</p> <p>Remember to use your initial report as a guide for your reinspection. There may have been many deficiencies with varying deadlines for compliance. This may require you to reinspect more than once. As with your initial fire inspection report, always end every inspection report in a positive manner as the example given previously, such as; Thank you for your assistance during my re inspection, if there is any further assistance or more clarification required, please contact me at your convenience.</p> <p>Make sure to complete a separate inspection report for each inspection and reinspection. This helps segregate the steps in your process and provides a better timeline of your efforts on the inspection and compliance process.</p>
<p>Slide 11</p>	<p>For many reasons, some building owners or occupants will choose not to comply with your fire code compliance notices. While you always want to try the voluntary compliance approach, sometimes a more formal method is required. A formal order that activates the legal system may be required. While orders are usually used for those property owners who refuse to comply, you may also want to consider this approach where the fire code deficiency presents a serious and potentially immediate risk to the health and safety of occupants.</p>
<p>Slide 12</p>	<p>Emergency and dangerous situations support the need for a much more formal approach and completion of a formal final order of compliance. This will mean formalizing your inspection report into an order that is the first step in taking the matter forward into your jurisdictions administrative and court systems. Despite the reality that most cases will not require this step, you should document every inspection file with the understanding that it could go this route for enforcement.</p>

	<p>Make sure that your report writing is complete and that you have followed all of your own processes and procedures in managing the inspection. You will need to defend your findings and the process you employed over the course of your inspection. You may have to deal with administrative review panels, lawyers and judges in the process so you can expect that every element of your inspection will be scrutinized. Make sure you pay a lot of attention to the details and can explain what is different about this file that required</p>
<p>Slide 13</p>	<p>Every element of your inspection process will require documentation. A simple request for information or phone call from the property owner may only warrant a note in the file related to the question and answer provided. A missing fire alarm system in a hotel will dictate a much more formal and extensive set of documents to ensure the situation is resolved.</p> <p>Your departments operational guidelines and inspection policies should provide guidance on expectations and file composition.</p> <p>While the tone of the selected communications should always be professional, the tone may vary depending on the context. Courtesy letters booking appointments, or responding to queries, will likely be friendly more reflecting the way you speak. Other communications like final notices will be much more formal and may reflect a specified format and layout of content.</p>
<p>Slide 14</p>	<p>A letter is a formal means of communication that requires adherence to specific rules related to layout, content and construction. While there are many places where an inspector may use a letter, they should follow a consistent layout and format. Many jurisdictions use a standardized template to make sure that all letters meet certain standards.</p> <p>While letters will be used for many different things, they should reflect your style and approach. The letter should speak to the property owner similarly to how you would talk to them. Develop a style and practice using it. Your style should reflect your manner of speech and be personable, while always remaining professional.</p>
<p>Slide 15</p>	<p>Always remember that someone has to read the letter you are writing. Be concise, stick to the relevant facts and follow a standardized format that supports the reader.</p> <p>Letters should always be on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Use a standard font type and size, ideally 11 or 12 point, to make it as easy to read as possible. Use corporate letterhead for all letters.</p> <p>Remember to properly structure your sentences and paragraphs. Run on sentences and paragraphs that cover more than one subject are difficult</p>

	to interpret and reflect poorly on the writer. Modern word processing software includes grammar, spelling and word usage tools. Use them to help tighten up your letter writing.
Slide 16	Structure your letter so that it has a flow. You may wish to deal with the most serious issues first and work your way to less serious ones later in the letter. You may also want to use the same systemic approach used to conduct the inspection as your layout for the letter. Jumping all over the place makes the letter and its important information difficult to follow and understand.
Slide 17	<p>A business letter follows a pretty standard set of rules in terms of how it should be constructed.</p> <p>A business letter will be written on official letterhead. This provides visual confirmation to the receiver that this is an important communication. The letterhead should include the business contact information.</p> <p>A header should include the Date the letter was written and a Reference line that tells the reader what the letter is about. The header will be followed by the salutation line.</p>
Slide 18	<p>The body of a letter is comprised of three sections, a beginning, middle and a conclusion.</p> <p>The beginning is an introductory paragraph that speaks broadly to the subject of the letter and prepares the reader for the details further into the letter.</p> <p>The body then continues with the details the writer wishes to communicate. In the case of an inspection writer, it will include descriptions of the observations and expected actions of the property owner. You may include photos in each paragraph to assist in clarifying communications. Remember, each new subject represents a new paragraph. This keeps concepts and issues sorted and avoids confusion.</p> <p>Your conclusion is a polite close that finalizes expected next steps and provides the reader with information they will require to meet your expectations.</p>
Slide 19	<p>A well written paragraph is actually a pretty straight forward exercise. The paragraph in an inspection letter should include three elements. First, note the observed issue. For example, “Fire extinguisher tags show that the facilities fire extinguishers were last inspected in 2017”.</p> <p>The second element will be to describe why this is a problem. “Section 6.2.1 Portable Extinguishers requires that all portable extinguishers be</p>

	<p>inspected and maintained in conformance with NFPA 10 “Portable Fire Extinguishers.” The final element is to tell the reader what compliance requires. “All portable fire extinguishers in your facility must be inspected at least once per year by a qualified professional.”</p> <p>Using this approach provides clear direction to the owner or their agent to correct the deficiencies you have identified.</p>
<p>Slide 20</p>	<p>The final paragraph should set the stage for compliance and maintaining the relationship. Always thank the owner for their time and attention, even where the inspection was challenging.</p> <p>Make sure to provide a date that reflects your expectations for compliance or when you will be back to reinspect. Reinforce that you are a resource for the building owner and that you remain available to answer any questions or concerns they have related to the inspection.</p> <p>Use a closing salutation that reflects the opening. Sign the document and print your name and title below your signature. If your contact information is not provided elsewhere, you may wish to include your phone or email below your title.</p>
<p>Slide 21</p>	<p>The whole point of the inspection was to get your report in front of the building owner. Use an enclosures section below the signature block that itemizes the various documents you have referenced and included in the letter. This could include your fire inspection report, specific fire code excerpts and photographs as applicable.</p>
<p>Slide 22</p>	<p>Email has taken on an essential role in the sharing of information. It is a very distinct tool that has changed the manner and pace at which we communicate. Email permits a rapid and inexpensive method to share information about an inspection, communicate complex issues, and share with a large group of people.</p> <p>Remember that when you use email as part of your business process, it becomes a part of the formal record and is subject to freedom of information requirements, just like any other communications and documentation. Remember too that email can cause problems. The pace of communication can cause errors in research and content because of expectations of instant response. The ability to communicate with large groups of individuals simultaneously can also result in miscommunications or sharing privileged information with the wrong people. Don’t let the pace of email demands outstrip your ability to perform your work accurately and professionally.</p>
<p>Slide 23</p>	<p>Most building inspection issues are quite predictable and can be anticipated in many different occupancy types. A basic checklist that</p>

	<p>identifies these common deficiencies as well as their code references can be a very valuable tool to the inspector. Many jurisdiction have developed these checklists.</p> <p>These checklists help ensure a consistency of approach by different inspectors. It is important to remember that you are not inspecting a checklist. You are inspecting a building. A common concern with checklists is that those who are using them concentrate more on filling out the checklist than on the task the checklist was supposed to support. Evaluate the building, make your observations and document them in field notes and your checklist.</p> <p>Simple inspections like those in an office might only require the checklist as a record of the inspection. More commonly, the checklist will form part of an inspection file that includes field notes, sketches, diagrams, letters and a formal report. You generate when doing fire inspections. If you are not sure whether more information than the checklist is required assess the situation. Does the checklist provide sufficient information that would defend your observations and instructions? If the answer is no or not sure, you will need to develop a more complete file.</p>
<p>Slide 24</p>	<p>When you perform an inspection that reveals serious deficiencies, a detailed report will be required. This may be due to a large number of deficiencies or a few complex issues that will require more detail than can be included in a checklist.</p> <p>Your detailed report needs to be just that- detailed. Include all fire code and legislative references as required. Make sure you thoroughly explain the deficiency and provide specific guidance on timelines for compliance.</p>
<p>Slide 25</p>	<p>Use the same basic formatting rules in a detailed report as you do a letter. Choose a clear legible format that aligns with your agency’s letter format. Paper size should be 8.5 X 11 and an 11 or 12-point font.</p> <p>While a handwritten report may be adequate, it is always best to take the time to type them out. This ensures legibility and reduces the likelihood of miscommunication.</p> <p>If your report is quite lengthy with extensive information, separating areas using tabs and appendixes is suggested, this again will be less confusing and allow the reader to follow a logical document flow.</p>
<p>Slide 26</p>	<p>Your will discover many fire inspections start with a formal complaint from the public. These reports need to be taken seriously and thoroughly documented and investigated. Ideally your organization will have a complaints management policy in place that will support your actions.</p>

	<p>After receiving a complaint, you should schedule a visit to the building in question and assess the situation. While you will want to look specifically at the issues related to the complaint, take the opportunity to observe for any other problems.</p>
Slide 27	<p>Document your fire inspection complaint inspection the same way you would with all inspections you conduct. Prepare your file, including a cover letter, detailed report, photographs, sketches and other supporting documentation. The only difference when conducting fire inspection based on a received complaint and a scheduled fire inspection, is the complaint inspection is reactive while scheduled ones are proactive. If you have found the complaint to be viable and a fire code violation exists, all of the standard elements of the process apply- document, allot time for the deficiency(s) to be corrected and schedule a re-inspection to monitor compliance.</p>
Slide 28	<p>A properly documented fire inspection identifies the issue, explains why it is an issue and provides guidance on how to correct it. Code references are essential to supporting why an observed problem needs to be resolved.</p> <p>In some jurisdictions, the fire code may also be supported by local ordinances that provide more exacting requirements for things like storage, activities permitted in forest interface areas, control of open fires or use and storage of fireworks. Make sure to accurately document what fire code requirements of local bylaws are being used to support your report requirements.</p> <p>Make sure you use the correct code reference. For example, Part 2 of the fire code requires fire extinguishers to be provided and installed. Part 6 speaks to their maintenance. If you are citing a lack of fire extinguishers or a failure to hang them properly, you want Part 2. If, however, the building owner hasn't had them inspected you will want Part 6.</p>
Slide 29	<p>Codes use the words “shall, may, and “is authorized” to qualify the application of some requirements. Shall means the section of the code is mandatory and permits no latitude to building owners or the inspector.</p> <p>May provides some latitude to the building owner or inspector. This allows selective application of the code reference, based on consideration of the entire building. The local authority- you the inspector- has a great deal of authority under the fire code to make judgements on the value and effectiveness of the application of the code and alternative solutions. Make sure you document your decisions in these cases carefully.</p>

	<p>Is authorized indicates that the inspector has the ability to permit certain activities or solutions. Again, documentation of the overall conditions of the approval is important.</p>
Slide 30	<p>Many fire code violations like the improper use of door wedges and extension cords can be resolved while you are doing the inspection. This offers you the opportunity to educate and correct the observed problem. Frequently these minor violations are mostly due to a lack of understanding of the building owner.</p> <p>Even where these violations are resolved, make sure to record them in your field notes and checklist and mark them resolved. They aren't usually noted in more formal detailed reports.</p>
Slide 31	<p>Every interaction with a property owner or building whether it's recording a complaint, documenting an inspection or running a compliance enforcement process needs to be documented thoroughly, completely and in accordance with your jurisdictions laws and policies.</p> <p>Some aspects of this documentation will become part of the permanent record of the jurisdiction and influence future enforcement and compliance processes. This is really important with the introduction of performance-based codes and alternative solutions. The history of the alternative solution and how it must be maintained is essential for compliance monitoring to ensure these alternative solutions continue to provide a high degree of life safety.</p>
Slide 32	<p>Records retention policies are generally a decision of the local authority based on freedom of information and privacy laws. These policies and procedures are part of your local authority's records management policies and apply to your inspection records. Record retention policies should also specifically identify inspection records that must form part of the permanent record of the jurisdiction. These records may be removed from the inspectors' files and be stored in an archive that will be accessible in the future as required.</p>
Slide 33	<p>Freedom of information and privacy legislation is intended to do two things. First, it protects sensitive information that a business or government collects and requires these organizations to only use it for the purposes it was collected. These rules prohibit sharing of this information with others or any other use except with specific and informed consent. Your inspection files will have protected information within them and need to be stored and shared with care.</p> <p>Freedom of information and privacy legislation also requires you to make your files available to anyone who requests them. There is a specific process to request these files that requires them to be assessed for</p>

	<p>personal information prior to them being released. Remember this when you are completing your reports, letters and documents. They are public documents and can inform others opinion on your professionalism.</p>
<p>Slide 34</p>	<p>Every Canadian province and territory has passed legislation regarding freedom of information and privacy protection. There are differences in each of these pieces of legislation but there are basic similarities between them all. These acts provide individuals with the right to request access to information in the custody or control of public bodies. It also provides public bodies with a framework for conducting the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. A public body includes local government and your activities as a fire inspector.</p> <p>The acts are supported by regulations that define how the Acts should be applied. It is important that you are familiar with both the Act and Regulations applicable in your jurisdictions.</p> <p>The federal act speaks specifically to information collected and in the custody of the federal government. You may have to deal with this act if you are inspecting federal facilities.</p>
<p>Slide 35</p>	<p>As a fire inspector you should be familiar with this legislation. You should also consult your agency’s privacy coordinator or person responsible for administering the act regarding any and all requests for your fire inspection documents or materials. There are detailed guidelines governing the release of personal information, so prior to releasing anything, all requests must go through your agencies procedures to make sure these requests for information are properly vetted prior to release.</p> <p>There are serious penalties for mishandling or improperly releasing protected information. Do not release any information unless it has been properly vetted by a qualified person.</p> <p>If your municipality does not have a privacy coordinator or policy regarding the release of public record documents, contact the appropriate provincial or territorial privacy office for guidance and support.</p>
<p>Slide 36</p>	<p>It is likely that your jurisdiction already has global freedom of information and privacy policies and procedures in place. They apply to your efforts as an inspector and it is your responsibility to make sure you know, understand and follow them.</p> <p>It is important to understand these policies prior to a request being made for your records. Freedom of information requests include very specific expectations from the agency that includes:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific timelines for your response usually taken directly from the Act and related to your organizations internal processing, • Interpretation and completeness of the request and your response, and • Fees that may be charged by the responding agency. In some jurisdictions the provincial or territorial regulations control this. <p>There are serious penalties in these acts if the local authority or its agents fail to comply with access to information requirements or they fail to properly protect personal information in their care. It is important that all of your processes are well understood and followed in all cases.</p>
<p>Slide 37</p>	<p>The amount of publicly accessible information in public bodies, like local governments hands is incredible. It includes emails, text messaging, hard copy records and telephone logs to name a few. These records contain large amounts of information and much of that may be sensitive and protected. Requests for information need to be handled by professionals who are intimately familiar with the rules and processes related to collecting and assessing these materials prior to release.</p> <p>As a fire inspector you have access to information that is deemed private and protected as part of your duties. Things like company trade secrets, personal medical information and information deemed private are commonly in our files.</p> <p>Ignorance is not an excuse for avoiding or mishandling a request for information. Missing documents, exceeding timelines for response or denial of the request are all subject to penalties under the law. Frequently, they also become a public embarrassment when media or social media becomes aware of this. You can avoid this with a solid understanding of your organizations privacy and information policies.</p>
<p>Slide 38</p>	<p>File management has become a real challenge for all agencies, large and small. All fire departments and local governments should have some type of file maintenance system that allows for fire inspection files to be stored securely. These file management systems should be complete and recognize the changing nature of the records it has to account for. Files are not just the paper reports but include retention of things like emails and text messages. The system has to be secure and support daily operations, but it also has to support swift and accurate response to requests for information.</p> <p>While no specific system is better than the other, it is essential that a consistently applied system is in place. Most often, the local authority has a file management system in place regarding all of its files, including fire inspections. It is important that your files can correlate with the local</p>

	<p>authorities building, business licensing, utility, and other file systems as applicable.</p>
Slide 39	<p>Where you have a stand-alone fire management system, the most common is based on the physical address of the building. This allows the tracking of the building over its life, owners, and occupancies. While businesses may change locations over time, the building does not.</p> <p>No specific system is considered the best, what is important is the usability and retrieval of files when needed.</p>
Slide 40	<p>Many fire department files on buildings will be a comprehensive file made up of all the interactions the department may have with a building. It is likely to include a wide range of materials that may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection permits, certificates of compliance • Plan and permit applications and reviews • Hazardous materials and business producing or utilizing these products • Fire detection system, inspection dates • Complaints • Code violation notices • Fire investigations, on-going and concluded • Fire inspector field notes • Compliance documents, alarms system verifications, sprinkler maintenance and inspection certifications <p>Your files should follow a standardized structure that will allow you to quickly and efficiently find the materials you are looking for. Remember, it may not be you who needs to find something, so a consistent approach, documented in a procedural document will be very helpful.</p>
Slide 41	<p>A good records management system will consist of one master file that captures everything. Multiple files in several locations makes file management difficult and meeting legislated privacy and information release requirements nearly impossible.</p> <p>Working files may be created to support current operations and should be defined in policy and support current operations. These working files should only last as long as the current operational requirements last and then be returned to the master file.</p> <p>Your file management system should include accountability measures that includes limiting who can access them and provide for periodic file audits.</p>
Slide 42	<p>Many fire departments have moved to electronic file management systems. The inspection portions of these systems are usually part of a</p>

	<p>larger system that includes emergency and other records related to the department and the property.</p> <p>These systems offer powerful tools that support the fire inspector in delivering their inspection and sharing that information with others. Tablets and other portable devices have software applications that allow you to update your files in real time. These applications may have drop down menus that allow you to automate your checklists and automatically update reports with the appropriate code references.</p> <p>Many of these systems have drawing tools that will allow you to do your field sketches in the system and apply it to your file. They will also support taking a picture and attaching directly to your file.</p>
<p>Slide 43</p>	<p>Whatever program is selected will require careful thought and the development of specific operational and functional guidelines for them to work well. Access and privacy policies are as important for digital records as they are for paper. Careful consideration of the vulnerability of the system to outside security risks and how the data is protected are essential in today’s world of cyber security threats.</p> <p>These systems are also increasingly complicated for users. Training and ongoing skills maintenance is essential to make sure the system supports the delivery of a great fire inspection program. This starts with an effective training program for users, development of comprehensive operational guidelines and procedures and ongoing information technology support.</p>
<p>Slide 44</p>	<p>Every fire inspection you are tasked to complete has the potential to end up in either an administrative or judicial enforcement process. Whether the building owner appeals your findings or just refuses to comply, you may be required to participate in some form of legal proceeding. Your attention to detail, documentation and process will make the difference between success or failure.</p> <p>You will be called on to defend your work to this point. Your files will become part of the court or administrative bodies records and will be carefully scrutinized. Here is where your commitment to professionalism, careful documentation of the facts, research into the proper code references and your well written correspondence and reports will pay off.</p>
<p>Slide 45</p>	<p>Presenting evidence can be a very daunting experience. While experience is the best teacher, there is a lot you can do to make the experience less stressful, even where you are testifying for the first time.</p> <p>Preparation is the key. Study every element of your files, be familiar with the history of the building as it pertains to this testimony. You need to be an expert on fire inspection procedures, fire and administrative code</p>

	<p>interpretation and on the building, you are testifying about. Study these materials until you are confident in your expertise.</p>
<p>Slide 46</p>	<p>Be factual, and do not speculate. Your testimony should reflect the facts as you observed them. This includes what you saw, what you documented, communications with the building owner and steps you have taken to achieve compliance to this point. This is where preparation will be critical. You will be questioned on these matters.</p> <p>Make sure that you bring all relevant information, photographs, sketches or other physical evidence with you to court. Like we said earlier, a picture is worth a thousand words and will be very helpful to the judge or hearing officials understanding of the issues.</p> <p>Get to the hearing early so you have time to figure out where to go and to get yourself organized.</p> <p>Dress appropriately. Your department likely has guidelines on proper courtroom attire, but if they don't, formal attire including a jacket and tie should be considered.</p>
<p>Slide 47</p>	<p>While giving testimony, stick to the facts you know, do not add your opinion, state facts as asked, and nothing more.</p> <p>It is difficult to remain impassive when someone publicly challenges your work or competence, but it is essential that you do so. Answer the questions clearly and factually without resorting to anger or sarcasm.</p> <p>Make sure that you understand the question. Take the time you need to consider the question, and if you are not clear on it, ask for it to be repeated or rephrased. Don't be pushed into providing an answer without thinking about it or that you don't fully understand.</p> <p>Keep your answers short and to the point and only answer the question that was asked. If they wish more information, they will ask.</p> <p>If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Never speculate or guess. If the answer is in your field notes or reports that you brought with you it is permissible to ask to refer to them to answer the question factually.</p>
<p>Slide 48</p>	<p>Short and concise answers are the best approach to answering questions in legal proceedings.</p> <p>There are some great things you can do to help yourself be successful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a well-rehearsed “elevator speech” that provides a short but complete summary of your qualifications, background, and

	<p>experience. Take your resume or curriculum vitae with you if they want more detail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen carefully to the question and answer it directly. Rehearse with an experienced co-worker can help to develop these skills. • Prepare a court package of materials related to the case and make sure it is properly tabbed to allow you to quickly find the information you may require. <p>Remember if you are going to have to testify, Prepare, Prepare and when in doubt, Prepare some more.</p>
Slide 49	<p>The point of a fire inspection program is to make people and buildings safe from fire. Your skills as a fire inspector and the effectiveness of your program ultimately hinge on your documentation skills. Your inspection is part of a legal process that could see your findings challenged in a courtroom. This means that every single file you are responsible for must be completed accurately and consistently.</p> <p>There are a wide range of communication forms that you will have to master as a fire inspector. You need to be able to read and interpret complex concepts to non-expert people verbally and in writing. You need to develop expert skills in sketching, developing diagrams and photography so that you can better illustrate and describe deficiencies in the buildings and properties you inspect. You will also need to develop advanced listening and presentation skills that will allow you to efficiently and professionally express these concepts in meetings, administrative and court proceedings.</p>
Slide 50	<p>You will need to become an expert researcher. Your skills at researching a complex mix of bylaws, regulations, fire code requirements and referenced standards will be essential. Your findings must reflect the highest levels of professionalism, starting with accuracy and completeness.</p> <p>As you gain expertise, you may be qualified as an expert witness where you will be acting as an advisor to the courts by providing an opinion pertaining to the facts of the case.</p>
Slide 51	<p>You will have to remember that your role is to resolve fire safety deficiencies in building and the best way to do that is to work with building owners. That requires a high level of communication skills. Professional language, remembering who your audience is and taking the time to review your findings will help you achieve your public safety objectives.</p> <p>The application of consistent procedures result in predictable outcomes. Every inspection is different, but the process you apply to your inspection</p>

	<p>and documentation practices should be identical. This allows you to master the process, eliminate the potential of missing steps and to focus on the deficiencies you have identified. Your processes should be documented in procedures and guidelines, and be supported by checklists and standardized templates. Your records are public documents that contain private information. Your records management practices need to reflect your jurisdictions policies and your provincial or territorial legislation.</p> <p>Your success in gaining compliance on your most difficult fire inspections depends on professionalism through all steps you your inspection, including your documentation practices.</p>
Slide 52	<p>In part two we discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The fire inspection report including follow-up information• Communication with the building owner• The need for detailed information of the property as well as up-to date contact info• Re-inspections and Final Notices• Letter writing: be concise and follow a standardized format and stick to relevant facts• The advantages and pitfalls of email communications• When serious deficiencies are notes, a detailed report is required• Including fire code and legislative references in your communication• The importance of record keeping• Freedom of information policies and procedures• File management and organization practices• How to prepare for presenting evidence in a legal proceeding