



National Fire Protection Association

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FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY FOR ANIMAL HOUSING FACILITIES

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Organizations that, because of the nature of their business are involved with animal husbandry, face unique challenges. Similar to any other entity, these organizations are obligated to provide a safe environment for the human occupants. Facilities that board animals, other than a number of zoos, typically do not have any specific regulations addressing the fire and life safety of the animals. Fire and life safety mandates such as the fire resistance rating of structural elements, smoke management systems, fire sprinklers, fire alarms and means of egress requirements are not discussed. Traditional building and fire codes provide for broadly applied concepts to the facilities, but lack any specificity with regard to the very unique nature of the animal inhabitants.

It is in this capacity that NFPA 150, “*Standard on Fire and Life Safety in Animal Housing Facilities*”, can lend a hand to the Authority Having Jurisdiction, as well as to the owners, operators and caretakers of these facilities. NFPA 150 intends to bridge the gap between the adopted fire and building codes and any other applicable document with regard to facilities that care for or manage animals. NFPA 150 aims to improve health and welfare of animals while protecting human life and property and mission continuity that can come into play in certain types of animal housing sites.

The requirements of NFPA 150 recognize the following fundamental principles:

- (1) Animals are sentient beings.
- (2) Animals, both domesticated and feral, lack the ability of self-preservation when housed in buildings and other structures.
- (3) Current building, fire, and life safety codes do not address the life safety of the animal occupants.

The requirements found in NFPA 150 are written with the intention that animal housing facilities will continue to be designed, constructed, and maintained in accordance with the applicable building, fire, and life safety codes. The requirements of NFPA 150 are not intended to replace or rewrite the basic requirements for the human occupants. Instead, NFPA 150 provides additional minimum requirements for the protection of the animal occupants and the human occupants who interact with those animals in these facilities.

NFPA 150 is divided into three major sections: The first section, Chapters 1–3, contains only administrative requirements, while the second section, Chapters 4–10, provides general requirements for all facilities housing animals (i.e., facility sub classification, animal category, construction, means of egress, fire protection, and interior finish requirements), and the third section, Chapters 11–13, includes specific requirements focused on the class of the facility.

The Smithsonian National Zoological Park (National Zoo) in Washington DC, one of the preeminent zoos in the world, is home to a variety of animals from diverse habitats all around the world. The National Zoo prides itself for providing humane living conditions for these animals that are based, scientifically, on the species mental and physical health necessities. The National Zoo has been implementing the new NFPA 150 requirements.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the owners to provide a safe and stress free environment for their animals. NFPA 150 is only one instrument for the owner and the enforcing officials to provide an acceptable level of fire and life safety for the animals.