

Fire Department

To: Finance Committee

From: Fire Chief Tanya Reynen

Date: 10/1/2024

Subject: Inspection, Testing and Maintenance (ITM) Third-Party online reporting

Background

Fire protection systems, such as fire alarm systems, fire sprinkler systems and cooking hood extinguishing systems, are known variables in any community's lifesaving efforts and property conservation. Annual inspections and maintenance by qualified professionals precipitate their success. Occupancies required to have these systems within the City of Watertown must provide annual inspection and maintenance documentation as specified under the current fire prevention code.

Across our region, the use of third party ITM reporting is a crucial element in enforcing and tracking the status of fire protection systems. Communities surrounding us utilizing a third-party reporting system include Beaver Dam, City of Waukesha, City of Brookfield, and City of Pewaukee. This national best practice ensures that life safety systems are properly operating and maintained, a key factor in our community's safety not only to the public but to the firefighters who respond to emergencies. The current practice within the City of Watertown is to leave a paper copy with the property owner to be reviewed during an annual or semiannual fire inspection. Most often these records are lost or misplaced making tracking or compliance very difficult. ITM Third Party Reporting programs are specifically designed to allow the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), in this case the Fire Department, the ability to receive inspection reports from fire protection system service companies electronically. This enables the fire department to identify non-compliant fire protection systems as soon as possible and work with the property owner to restore the systems to the level they were designed to function., This is a crucial step in ensuring our community's and firefighters' safety.

This practice of Inspection, Testing and Maintenance, as outlined within NFPA 25 and NFPA 72 has been adopted by the City of Watertown ordinance Chapter 303 and Wisconsin Chapter 314, Fire Prevention. The only change will be how the city and the Fire Department will receive these records. The Department is in the process of requesting an ordinance addition to require the use of a third-party reporting service for fire protection inspection and maintenance records. This ordinance will give greater clarity on the requirements and process in which certain fire protection inspection and maintenance records are obtained.

The department did research by researching and meeting with three ITM companies.

- Brycer, The Compliance Engine (TCE)
- Inspection Reports Online (IROL)
- Life Safety Inspection Vault (LIV)

Each company was evaluated for the following capabilities:

1. Ability to connect to our Records Management System (RMS).
2. Ability to track the following, at minimum: Fire alarm systems, Fire sprinkler systems, and Fire suppression systems in cooking hoods.
3. Accuracy and approach to gathering information on local businesses within our community.
4. Cost to contractors within the area for electronic record submission.
5. Professional recommendations from area departments utilizing these systems.

It is important to note, this service is available at NO COST to the City, or directly to the property owner. The ITM vendor bills the contractor a fee for records submitted. The ITM record is then paired with the electronic inspection record using our inspection software. Additionally, the third-party vendor takes a proactive approach, sending reminders to property owners for required services and following up on any deficiency repairs to ensure systems are maintained and operational.

Additional benefits of utilizing a third-party vendor for the ITM records is ensuring the records are completed by a certified inspector/contractor, updated and maintained business owner contact information and assistance in determining inspectable occupancies within the department's inspection district.

Budget Goal

Fosters community growth by assessing opportunities, stakeholder input, environmental needs, and modern code and policy priorities.

Maintains a safe and healthy community, with an eye toward future needs and trends.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact on the Department or Cities budget. The company does charge \$15/record which is paid for by the contractor completing inspection or maintenance on the system. Due to the common practice of electronic record submission, many contractors have this cost in their current fees regardless of if the records are sent electronically.

Recommendation

The department recommends contracting with LIV as the ITM for the following reasons:

1. At the time of review, LIV is the only company that provides bi-directional reporting with our RMS. This means that information could be updated from our RMS system to LIV and from LIV to RMS. Examples of this type of information, in addition to the annual inspections, would be emergency contact information for the occupancy, the name and contact information of the alarm monitoring company, and the status of repairs and maintenance of the installed systems. Brycer TCE had limited one-way communication, and IROL did not have an Application Programming Interface (API) at the time of the evaluation. Information like this is critical during incidents, and the value of accurate, timely information is essential to our mission.
2. LIV completed additional steps completed by their company to ensure accuracy in data collection and maintenance.
3. \$15/record as opposed to higher costs with other companies.
4. Recommended company from trusted professionals in the Fire Service.

2024 Operational Goal

Implementation of programs to improve fire prevention and inspection efforts within the City of Watertown Fire Department response area.