



Fire Flow: Safety Standards for Public Utilities and Cities

A municipality (city) of a certain size must adopt, by ordinance, public safety standards for installing fire hydrants and maintaining water pressure sufficient for emergency fire suppression in residential areas within its jurisdiction. Public utilities within the city’s jurisdiction are required to comply with its ordinances.

Fire Flow Requirements for Cities

Table 1 Criteria to Determine if Your City is Subject to Fire Flow Ordinances

<i>City Population Criteria</i>	<i>Located in At Least One County with this Population Criterion</i>	<i>Cities Meeting Criteria</i>
Greater than 1,000,000, (with a public utility within its corporate limits)	None	Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio
Between 36,000 and 41,000	Greater than 1.8 million	None
Between 7,000 and 30,000	Between 155,000 and 180,000	Azle, Fair Oaks Ranch, Forney, Heath, Mineral Wells, Seagoville, Seguin, Selma, Terrell, Universal City
Between 11,000 and 18,000	Between 125,000 and 230,000	Azle, Canyon, Glenn Heights, Mineral Wells, Red Oak, Terrell

A city must first determine whether it meets the population criteria specified under Title 30, Texas Administrative Code (30 TAC), Subsection 290.46(x). Based on city and county population at the time of the most recent (2020) decennial census, the cities listed in Table 1 are required to comply with the fire flow regulations.

Public Safety Standards to Establish

If you have determined that fire flow requirements apply to your city - to protect public safety in residential areas - you must adopt standards, by ordinance, for:

- **Installing** fire hydrants that, at a minimum, follow current American Water Works Association (AWWA) standards for fire hydrants and their location. [30 TAC Subsection 290.44(e)(6)].

- **Maintaining** a minimum flow at a fire hydrant of 250 gallons per minute for at least two hours while maintaining a pressure of at least 20 pounds per square inch (psi) throughout the distribution system during emergencies such as firefighting. The flow is in addition to the maximum daily demand for other purposes. [30 TAC Subsection 290.46(x)(4)]

Additional Capacity Requirements for Wholesale Water Providers

Just as additional capacities are required of public utilities in affected cities [30 TAC Subsections 290.46(x) and (y)], TCEQ also requires additional water amounts from wholesale water suppliers that serve those utilities. Wholesale providers must include in the obligated or pledged amount of water under all wholesale contracts, the amount needed to comply with fire flow capacities. [30 TAC Subsection 290.45(e)(2)]

If Your City Must Meet the Fire Flow Requirements

Send any necessary documentation (see below) to:

Technical Specialist, Plan and Technical Review Section
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, MC-159
P.O. Box 13087
Austin, TX. 78711-3087

- **If you have adopted an ordinance, provide one of the following:**
 - A copy of the ordinance requiring the installation of fire hydrants and a fire hydrant flow standard that provides the minimum fire flow requirement.
 - Documentation showing that there are no public utilities within your city's jurisdiction (see Find Out if You're a Public Utility on p. 2.)
- **If you have not adopted an ordinance, the following apply:**
 - Cities must make these changes within one year of the date that the rule first applied to your system.
 - If your water supply has not yet taken the actions to comply with the fire flow requirements, please begin to adopt the necessary ordinances and take the steps to meet all relevant flow and pressure requirements.
 - If the system needs facility updates to achieve compliance with the flow or pressure requirements, you must notify TCEQ for review and approval prior to making any significant change. Mail the planning material reflecting the changes to the address above.

Fire Flow Requirements for Public Utilities

As it pertains to fire flow requirements, a public utility is commonly known as an investor-owned utility [or as defined in 30 TAC, Subsection 290.46(x)(1)(B)].

A public utility includes:

- Any person, corporation, cooperative corporation, affected county; or
- Any combination of these persons or entities, owning or operating for compensation equipment or facilities for any of the following:
 - Transmission, storage, distribution, sale, or provision of potable water to the public.
 - Resale of potable water to the public for any use.
 - Collection, transportation, treatment, or disposal of sewage or other operation of a sewage disposal service for the public.

A public utility does not include:

- A municipal corporation, water supply or sewer service corporation, or a political subdivision of the state (for example a Municipal Utility District or Special Utility District), except an affected county, or their lessees, trustees, and receivers.
- Equipment or facilities owned and operated for either purpose by a municipality or other political subdivision of this state or a water supply or sewer service corporation.
- Any person or corporation not otherwise a public utility that furnishes the services or commodity only to itself or its employees or tenants as an incident of that employee service or tenancy when that service or commodity is not resold to or used by others.

Find Out if You are a Public Utility Within a City's Jurisdiction

Use the Public Utility Commission's free, web-based water and sewer [Certificate of Convenience and Necessity \(CCN\) finder](#)* to help search for public utilities.

You can also contact the city in which your utility is located to determine if you provide service to a residential area within their jurisdiction.

If Your Public Utility Must Meet Fire Flow Requirements

If your public utility is in a city that must meet fire flow requirements and has a fire flow ordinance you must:

- Comply with the requirements in it related to installing fire hydrants.
- Deliver water of sufficient flow and pressure (meeting the city's ordinance and standards) for those fire hydrants that meet all the following:
 - Connected to the public utility's distribution system.
 - Within the city's jurisdiction.
 - Located in a residential area.

* www.puc.texas.gov/industry/water/utilities/map.html

If your public utility is in a city that must comply with the fire flow requirements, but the city has not adopted an ordinance you must:

- Determine whether the current standards for installing fire hydrants in residential areas of the municipality meet the fire flow standards (see **Public Safety Standards to Establish** above).

Whether a city has an ordinance or not, a public utility in a residential area of an affected city must meet fire flow capacity requirements within one year of the date the rule first applied to your system (i.e., within one year of the completion of the most recent US Census).

The Rules and How They Were Established

The relevant rules are in 30 TAC, Subsection 290.46(x) and (y), and based on Texas Health and Safety Code (THSC), Sections 341.0358, and 341.03585. The Public Safety Standards were added to the THSC by House Bill (HB) 1391, 80th Legislature (2007), and amended by HB 3661, 81st Legislature (2009); HB 1814, 82nd Legislature (2011), and Senate Bill (SB) 1086, 83rd Legislature (2013). The Fire Hydrant Flow and Pressure Standards were added to the THSC by SB 1086, 83rd Legislature (2013).