



STAUNTON VIRGINIA FIRE & RESCUE Fire Marshal's Office

Phone: (540) 332-3720
Fax: (540) 332-3150

Perry W. Weller
Fire Marshal

500 N. Augusta St.
Staunton, VA 24401

Blasting Complaint Procedures for Property Owners

The Staunton Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) has the right to conduct blasting complaint investigations within the city limits of Staunton. The SFMO's investigation is principally focused on whether or not violations of the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) have been committed.

If you have concerns regarding blasting in your area, contact the Staunton Fire Marshal's Office at 540-332-3720.

- ✓ If requested, the identity of the person making the complaint could be kept confidential during the investigation, but becomes public information once the investigation is complete.
- ✓ Each complainant should have the following information available when calling the SFMO:
 - Your name, address, city, state, zip code, and telephone number(s);
 - Location of the blasting operation causing the complaint;
 - Person or name of the company causing the complaint, including address, telephone number, license numbers, etc. or any other identifying information. Please provide as much information as possible.
 - Description of complaint, dates, and times of incidents as best as you may be able to determine.
- ✓ At no time during the investigation are records open to the public. Investigation information can be held confidential until the matter has concluded. After the investigation, the complainant is notified in writing as to the outcome, and the records become public information.

The Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) contains regulations for the storage and use of explosives outside of a mining or quarry operation. Mining and quarry operations are regulated by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy.

The SFPC references NFPA 495, which establishes limits on ground vibrations and air blasts a building may be subjected to. These limits are based on long-standing national standards and are not offered as a guarantee against damage from ground vibration or air blast. Whether these limitations are exceeded or not, it does not prevent the building owner from instituting a civil action against the contractor or blaster.

If blasting is to occur within 500 feet of any structure, it shall be the responsibility of the blasting company to notify the occupants. Structures that are within 200 feet must be offered a "Pre-Blast Survey". This survey is typically conducted by a third-party engineering firm. The pre-blast survey is offered to document the existing condition of the structure and can assist the property owner should damage occur.

Please be aware that while blast noise and vibration can be held to non-damaging levels, it is normal for the blasts to be heard and felt, sometimes for considerable distances, depending upon the local geology and weather conditions. The human body can sense ground vibrations at levels that are less than 1/100th of that necessary to cause even minor damage to structures.

Please note that as part of the investigation process, the Blasting Firm in question will be contacted, and they are required to contact you as the complainant if you have any alleged damage.

