



## City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

**MARY SHEFFIELD**  
CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
DISTRICT 5

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** David Bell, Director, Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department

**FROM:** Mary Sheffield, President, Detroit City Council

**DATE:** January 22, 2025

**RE:** Request for Fire Inspection Information for Lafayette Towers

On the evening of Tuesday, January 21, 2025, a fire occurred on the fifth floor of the east building at Lafayette Towers Apartments. Despite the intensity of the fire, which filled several flights of the building's stairwells with smoke, residents reported that no alarms were heard during the entire incident. Instead, residents were only alerted to the danger by other tenants and security guards knocking on their doors.

This failure of the alarm system is deeply concerning, particularly given the building's history of multiple fires and repeated issues with delayed or non-functioning alarms. It is unacceptable for a residence that houses seniors, families, differently abled individuals, and even city employees to lack the necessary infrastructure to ensure their safety. In light of this, I am urgently requesting that your department address the following questions:

1. Why did the fire alarms not activate during the incident?
2. What are the specific requirements for fire alarms in a building of this type, and under what conditions should they activate?
3. When was the last building inspection conducted at Lafayette Towers, and what were the findings? Additionally, when is the next inspection scheduled?
4. Has the building management been cited for similar safety violations in the past? If so, what actions were taken to address them?
5. Will any tickets or citations be issued for the failure of the fire alarm system during the fire on January 21st?

6. Has Lafayette Towers submitted an emergency evacuation plan? If so, was that plan followed during the fire on January 21<sup>st</sup>?

Our residents' safety is paramount, and I appreciate your time in ensuring that proper safety measures are in place. If you have any questions, please contact Yvonne Ragland from my office at [yvonne.ragland@detroitmi.gov](mailto:yvonne.ragland@detroitmi.gov).

Cc: Honorable Colleagues  
City Clerk