

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS,
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IF YOU ARE LOCATED WITHIN OTHER JURISDICTIONS,
PLEASE CONTACT:

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GUIDELINES FOR “FIRE WATCH” DURING FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM IMPAIRMENTS



When should a Fire Watch be implemented?

Occasionally, a sprinkler or fire alarm system may need to be shut down. Except for temporary impairments, a Fire Watch shall be provided immediately when a building fire protection system is impaired. An example of a temporary impairment would be the shutdown that may normally occur when a scheduled routine testing or inspection service is being conducted.

For temporary impairments, such as those that result from scheduled routine testing/inspection service, a Fire Watch shall be provided when a building fire protection system is impaired for more than 8 continuous hours, regardless of the occupancy classification.

Once an impairment occurs, the owner should have the fire protection contractor on-site within 4 hours to start the repairs. All systems shall be repaired within 24 hours unless otherwise agreed upon with the DSFMO. All healthcare facilities shall notify the DSFMO upon any fire related incident using the form found at <https://statefiremarshal.delaware.gov/special-programs/health-care-facility-inspections/>

What criteria should a Fire Watch meet?

A Fire Watch shall consist of sufficient personnel to be able to physically tour and observe all important areas of the entire building within 60 minutes. Fire Watch personnel are to comprise of only responsible and mature individuals at least 18 years of age. They need to have access to a phone to notify 911. They need to be knowledgeable as to how to sound an alarm to notify all occupants and be aware of the location of the alarm and activation devices. Finally, the Fire Watch person(s) need to be specially trained in the use of fire extinguishers.

Additionally, there should be a process in place that will inform all building occupants that the fire protection system is impaired. This can be accomplished by using an easel board at all the main

entrances of an office building, a page and/or email to all employees within the affected building or, a short memo into the mailbox or under the door of each resident of an apartment building, or any other method or combination of methods.

In the event of a fire, occupants shall be notified by an all page, and/or individual notification. Other audible means shall be agreed upon by the Fire Marshal's Office.

What duties should the Fire Watch conduct?

As a minimum, the Fire Watch shall make hourly rounds of all areas that are affected by the system impairment during unoccupied times. In occupied areas that are affected by the system impairment during normal business hours, rounds shall be no more than every other hour. After hours the fire watch needs to happen every hour unless there is an alternative agreement with the Fire Marshal's Office.

For purpose of documentation for future reference, a permanent record of each round must be produced. This record, as a minimum, must identify the person making the round, refer to each area observed, note the approximate time of the observation, and log any comments worth noting.

Logbooks may be the most efficient form of permanent record. However, other methods approved by the State Fire Marshal as acceptable include but are not limited to a key and watch clock tape system or a watchman key station system.

Why is a Fire Watch needed?

For years, the fire prevention industry has recognized that fire protection systems provide a significant advantage of early detection and control of fires. Therefore, when these systems become negated, some equivalent compensatory measures need to be put in place to minimize the chances of catastrophe. History has shown that a fire watch, when properly applied, serves as an equivalent measure.