



Midwest City Fire Department Fire Marshal's Office

Fire Watch

General

A fire watch shall be provided for the protection of a building, structure and/or occupants when any of the following conditions exist:

- 1) The automatic fire sprinkler system, fire alarm system, or other fire protection system is out of service (OOS) for a building or facility.
- 2) A planned event/concert/gathering/assembly in which the nature of the facility/event poses a significant risk to the safety of the occupants/attendees.
- 3) A full Certificate of Occupancy has not yet been issued for the facility, and the owners/occupants are requesting the temporary/one-time use of the facility. Approval under these conditions is subject to both the Chief Building Official and the Fire Marshal.
- 4) When it is determined by the fire code official that a fire watch is essential for public safety in accordance with IFC Section 403.

Definitions

- 1) **Fire Watch***. A temporary measure intended to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of a building or portion thereof by one or more qualified individuals or standby personnel when required by the fire code official, for the purposes of identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of unwanted fire, raising an alarm of fire and notifying the fire department.
- 2) **Standby Personnel****. Qualified fire service personnel, approved by the Fire Chief. When utilized, the number required shall be as directed by the Fire Chief. Charges for standby personnel shall be between the occupant and service provider. *Standby Personnel are defined as members of a career fire department.*

General Fire Watch Requirements

- 1) Only Fire Department approved persons and/or companies may perform the duties of a Fire Watch.

A designee may be on-site maintenance personnel, *Standby Personnel***, or a third party company approved by the Fire Chief, or his designee. The sole responsibility will be maintaining continuous patrols of the affected property and alerting the fire department in case of emergencies.

On-Site maintenance personnel* and/or management personnel will be permitted to serve in the capacity of a Fire Watch for short duration impairment of fire protection systems; such as a sprinkler activation due to freezing in an apartment complex or fire alarm systems out of service due to malfunction, so long as a licensed fire protection company is en route for repairs at the time the system is placed out of service.

Standby Personnel** will be required when there are high Life Safety concerns with occupants who are either incapable of self-preservation, have limited capability to affect their own evacuations, egress from the facility is considered compromised, or based upon the nature of the facility/event it poses a significant risk to the safety of the occupants.

- 2) A representative of the building, or facility, shall contact the Fire Department a minimum of 72 hours prior to a planned impairment or need, or immediately when impairment is not planned, to coordinate personnel for the Fire Watch.
- 3) Be equipped with a fully charged means of communication with which they must contact 911 immediately upon recognizing an emergency situation.
- 4) Be equipped with a bullhorn/air horn (or other loud sounding device), flashlight, mobile phone or two-way radio.

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- 5) Be trained in the use of a fire extinguisher and capable of extinguishing a small incipient stage fire.
- 6) Fire Watch personnel are to be familiar with the building and procedures for sounding an alarm and alerting the fire department in the event of a fire.
- 7) Fire Watch personnel shall be visibly distinguishable from patrons and facility/event employees.
- 8) The duties of a Fire Watch shall be as follows, but not limited to:
 - a) As outlined in IFC Section 403.12.1.2, Duties.
 - (1) Keep diligent watch for fires, obstructions to means of egress and other hazards.
 - (2) Take prompt measures for remediation of hazards and extinguishment of fires that occur.
 - (3) Take prompt measures to assist in the evacuation of the public from the structures.
 - b) A log, indicating date and times, of completed rounds must be initiated when the fire system(s) goes out of service and kept current until all systems have been returned to full service.
 - c) A log, indicating date and times, shall be maintained when the occupant load of a facility must be monitored. *Form FW101 can be found on the Midwest City Fire Department's website for download and use during a Fire Watch.*
 - d) Fire Watch personnel shall continuously patrol the facility/event.
 - e) Detecting early signs of fire, notifying the occupants of the facility/event of a fire, and notifying the Fire Department.
 - f) Assist occupants with the safe evacuation from the facility/event.
 - g) Exit doors, exit access and corridors are checked at the beginning, periodically, and at the end of the Fire Watch for proper operation and obstructions.
 - h) Be familiar with the facility/event and the procedures for notification of the occupants of an emergency within the facility/event.

Public Assemblies and Events

When in the opinion of the Fire Chief, or his designee, a place of assembly ("A" Occupancy) as defined by the International Building Code, shall provide a Fire Watch in accordance with IFC Section 403.

The ratio of the number of occupants to Fire Watch personnel shall be of that required by IFC Sections 403.12.3 of a minimum of one (1) Fire Watch Personnel per every 250 persons, or as determined and approved by the fire code official.

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Excerpts from the 2015 International Fire Code

2015 International Fire Code, Section 403.12, Special Requirements for Public Safety

403.12.1 Fire watch personnel. When, in the opinion of the fire code official, it is essential for public safety in a place of assembly or any other place where people congregate, because of the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity, the *owner*, agent or lessee shall provide one or more fire watch personnel, as required and *approved*. Fire watch personnel shall comply with Sections 403.12.1.1 and 403.12.1.2.

403.12.1.1. Duty times. Fire watch personnel shall remain on duty while places requiring a fire watch are open to the public, or when an activity requiring a fire watch is being conducted.

403.12.1.2. Duties. On-duty fire watch personnel shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Keep diligent watch for fires, obstructions to *means of egress* and other hazards.
2. Take prompt measures for remediation of hazards and extinguishment of fires that occur.
3. Take prompt measures to assist in the evacuation of the public from the structures.

2015 International Fire Code, Section 901, Fire Protection Systems, General

901.7 Systems out of service. Where a required *fire protection system* is out of service, the fire department and the *fire code official* shall be notified immediately and, where required by the *fire code official*, the building shall either be evacuated or an *approved* fire watch shall be provided for all occupants left unprotected by the shut down until the *fire protection system* has been returned to service.

Where utilized, fire watches shall be provided with not less than one *approved* means for notification of the fire department and their only duty shall be to perform constant patrols of the protected premises and keep watch for fires.

901.7.1 Impairment coordinator. The building *owner* shall assign an impairment coordinator to comply with the requirements of this section. In the absence of a specific designee, the *owner* shall be considered the impairment coordinator.

901.7.2 Tag required. A tag shall be used to indicate that a system, or portion thereof, has been removed from service.

901.7.3 Placement of tag. The tag shall be posted at each fire department connection, system control valve, fire alarm control unit, fire alarm annunciator and *fire command center*, indicating which system, or part thereof, has been removed from service. The code official shall specify where the tag is to be placed.

901.7.4 Preplanned impairment programs. Preplanned impairments shall be authorized by the impairment coordinator. Before authorization is given, a designated individual shall be responsible for verifying that all of the following procedures have been implemented:

1. The extent and expected duration of the impairment have been determined.
2. The areas or buildings involved have been inspected and the increased risks determined.
3. Recommendations have been submitted to management or building owner/manager.
4. The fire department has been notified.
5. The insurance carrier, the alarm company, building owner/manager, and other authorities having jurisdiction have been notified.
6. The supervisors in the areas to be affected have been notified.
7. A tag impairment system has been implemented.
8. Necessary tools and materials have been assembled on the impairment site.

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901.7.5 Emergency impairments. When unplanned impairments occur, appropriate emergency action shall be taken to minimize potential personal injury and property damage. The impairment coordinator shall implement the steps outlined in Section 901.7.4.

901.7.6 Restoring systems to service. When impaired equipment is restored to normal working order, the impairment coordinator shall verify that all of the following procedures have been implemented:

1. Necessary inspections and tests have been conducted to verify that affected systems are operational.
2. Supervisors have been advised that protection is restored.
3. The fire department has been advised that protection is restored.
4. The building owner/manager, insurance carrier, alarm company and other involved parties have been advised that protection is restored.
5. The impairment tag has been removed.