

# **FIRE WATCH REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES**



**City of Canandaigua  
Office of the Fire Marshal**

# Fire Watch Requirements and Procedures

## Purpose

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Fire watch service is a temporary measure taken when an automatic fire protection system is impaired or becomes out-of-service or other hazardous conditions, when deemed necessary by the Fire Department or Office of the Fire Marshal. This service is intended to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of a building or its protected portion(s) by one or more qualified individuals, who are responsible for identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of unwanted fire, raising an alarm of fire and notifying the fire department.

The fire watch's primary function is to detect, notify, and evacuate the protected area or building. Firefighting activities is **NOT** the purpose of the watch and should be limited to incipient-level firefighting necessary to accomplish their primary function. Additionally, the fire watch is to remain on the property, for the purposes of assisting the fire department with information and establishing contact with the owner/manager.

## Scope

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The continued use and occupancy of any structure or business is dependent on all installed fire protection systems being maintained in an operational mode. Failure of any system to operate places the occupancy in jeopardy. Protection of persons and property against the hazards of fire is a management responsibility. The requirements of this procedure are intended to aid the management in the selection, requirements, duties and training of individuals used to perform a fire watch when systems are down and a fire watch is required to protect personnel and property from fire.

## Definitions

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**Deficiency.** A condition in which a system or portion thereof is damaged, inoperable, or in need of service, but does not rise to the level of an impairment.

**Emergency Impairment.** An abnormal condition where a system, component, or function is out of service due to an unexpected deficiency.

**Fire Watch.** A temporary measure intended to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of a building or portion thereof by one or more qualified individuals 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.

**Impairment.** A condition where a fire protection system or unit or portion thereof is out of service, and the condition can result in the fire protection system or unit not functioning in a fire event.

**Impairment Coordinator.** The person responsible for the maintenance of a particular fire protection system.

**Impairment Tag.** A tag used to indicate that a system, or portion thereof, has been removed from service.

**Planned Impairment.** An abnormal condition where a system, component, or function is out of service due to work that has been planned in advance.

## Type of Impairments

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The term impairment broadly encompasses a range of circumstances where a fire protection system, substantial portion of such a system or a system component is not functioning properly for any number of reasons.

Temporarily shutting down a fire protection system as part of performing the routine inspection, testing, and maintenance on that system while under constant attendance by qualified personnel, and where the system can be restored to service quickly, should not be considered impairments.

Additionally, fire alarm systems are routinely impaired in areas with automatic detection during construction or during theatrical performances involving pyrotechnics, smoke or flame effects as well as to conduct normal fire alarm system maintenance and testing. Such impairments can be limited to specific initiating devices and/or

functions (e.g., disconnecting the supervising station connection during system testing), or they can involve taking entire systems or portions of systems out of service.

Impairments can be planned or may be of an emergency nature, in either case the impairment coordinator is responsible to implement several steps outlined in Chapter 9 of the Fire Code of New York State.

Addition of new fire alarm devices or appliances, reprogramming of system software, or revisions to the water supply or sprinkler system piping for an automatic fire sprinkler system are examples of planned impairments.

Physical damage to a control unit or wiring, an operated sprinkler or system leakage, interruption of water supply, frozen or ruptured piping, and equipment failure are examples of emergency impairments.

## **Impairment Coordinator**

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The building owner shall assign an impairment coordinator to comply with the requirements of Chapter 9 of the Fire Code of New York State and this Administrative Rule. In the absence of a specific designee, the owner shall be considered the impairment coordinator.

Where the lease, written use agreement, or management contract specifically grants the authority for inspection, testing, and maintenance of the fire protection system(s) to the tenant, management firm, or managing individual, the tenant, management firm, or managing individual shall assign a person as impairment coordinator.

## **Requirements**

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If a fire protection system fails, or there are an excessive number of accidental activations or nuisance alarms, a building owner (or their representative) may be required by the Fire Department or the Office of the Fire Marshal to provide a fire watch until the system is repaired. Personnel to conduct the fire watch are determined by the building owner. Note: *A professional security company is **not** required.*

A fire watch is also required whenever fire protection systems are in a trouble or a supervisory mode for more than (8) eight hours.

A nuisance alarm is defined as "any alarm caused by mechanical failure, malfunction, improper installation, or lack of proper maintenance, or any alarm activated by a cause that cannot be determined." (NFPA 72, 3.3.5-1)

The management of the business or property shall supervise the fire watch service or designate a responsible person to provide supervision of fire watch. A fire watch is a 24-hour requirement, the same as the fire alarm or sprinkler system provided for the structure. If the supervisor is absent from the site a clear line of responsibility must be given to the fire watch in writing. Where utilized, fire watches shall be provided with at least 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.

## **Impaired System Tag Requirements /System Out of Service**

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Fire protection system(s) that are impaired for any length of time shall be tagged with an impairment tag.

The code requires the use of a clearly visible tag to alert building occupants and the fire department that all or part of the required fire protection system is impaired. The tag or label shall be clearly visible, weather resistant, of sufficient size (typically 4 inches x 6 inches) and be of the self-adhesive type or the wire-hanging type. The tag shall include the following information:

1. The words "DO NOT REMOVE BY ORDER OF THE FIRE MARSHAL."
2. Name, address and telephone number of the business or firm performing the testing.
3. Date that work was performed.
4. Printed name of person performing work.
5. Description of work performed.

### Example of Impairment Tag

| IMPAIRED SYSTEM                                      |                                      |  |   |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| DO NOT REMOVE<br><br>By Order of the<br>Fire Marshal | Date and Time<br>Impairment<br>Began | Anticipated Date<br>and Time<br>System Will Be<br>Returned to<br>Service | Impairment Type<br><input type="checkbox"/> Planned<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency |
|  | Testing Firm                         |  |   |
|  | Address                              |  |   |
|  | Phone                                |  |   |
|  | Serviced by                          |  |   |
|  | Seattle Fire Dept. Certificate No.   |  |   |
|  | Impairment Coordinator               |  |   |
|  | Description of impairment:           |  |   |
|  |                                      |  |   |
|  |                                      |  |   |

### Frequency of Inspections

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Fire watch personnel should patrol the entire facility every 15 minutes in the following situations:

- a) The facility has people sleeping.
- b) The facility is an institutional occupancy.
- c) The facility is an occupied assembly or educational occupancy

Occupied facilities that do not meet the requirements for a 15-minute patrol frequency should have a fire watch patrol every 30 minutes.

### Procedure

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Fire watch personnel must be familiar with the property to be protected or escorted thru the property to be made familiar with the site or structure, so when reporting a fire, they may give proper directions and information to the 911 Center. They shall become familiar with manufacturing switches, if applicable, all electrical shut off devices and main power cut-offs as well gas, oil and process water and any other areas that may be either hazardous to responding fire service personnel or add fuel to any fire situation. Fire watches must know the location of any fire extinguisher, sprinkler system controls, hose connections and all fire protection equipment in the structure or site.

Fire watch personnel shall be made familiar by management of all hazardous material locations and dangerous processes within the structure and site along with the storage areas for products that add fuel to combustion.

### Pre-Emergency Plans

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Fire watch personnel shall be made familiar with any pre-emergency plan and emergency plans that exist for the structure. Fire watch personnel must know their responsibility under any emergency plan in effect.

### Fire Alarm by Fire Watch

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If fire watch personnel discover a fire their first response is to notify the fire department by calling the 911 Center, they will be required to report the exact location of the fire and the extent of fire involvement. **ONLY AFTER** reporting the fire to the fire department may the attempt to use fire extinguishing equipment in the structure to extinguish the fire.

## General

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**A fire watch shall make rounds of the structure and grounds at intervals determined by the type of occupancy and the hazards and special conditions associated with this building or structure. A record of the rounds, times, and conditions shall be kept by the fire watch personnel and maintained by the management for future review by the Office of the Fire Marshal.**

The first round of a fire watch should begin as soon as possible, during the rounds the fire watch should make thorough inspection of the building or spaces assigned to him/her noting at a minimum the following;

1. Portable fire extinguishers are in place, unobstructed and in proper operating condition;
2. Corridors and exits are free and clear of storage and all other obstructions;
3. Exit and stairwell doors are clear and fully operational;
4. EXIT signs are visible and properly illuminated;
5. Fire doors, smoke barrier doors and hazardous area doors are kept closed and latched (i.e. not tied, wedged or blocked open in any fashion);
6. Oxygen cylinders/containers not in use are properly stored;
7. Electrical hazards are promptly reported and remedied;
8. No smoking or work involving cutting or welding or the use of flammable/combustible liquids is taking place (unless such work has been preauthorized and is taking place in an area that is properly fire separated from the remainder of the facility); and
9. Trash and other unnecessary accumulations of combustibles are promptly removed from the building

Fire watch personnel shall report promptly any condition that needs immediate attention; the management should correct reports of this nature immediately. Conditions that appear to cause fire hazards shall be noted on the fire watch hourly rounds report.

Management should provide the fire watch with written instructions on rounds, notification of personnel and names and ways to contact supervisory personnel.

## Cancellation of Fire Watch

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When an impaired system is restored to normal working order, the impairment coordinator shall verify that necessary inspections and tests have been made and notification has been provided to the Fire Department, the insurance carrier, the alarm company, the building owner/manager, and/or any supervisors or tenants in the affected areas.

**The Fire Chief & Fire Marshal shall be notified by sending an email message at [fmagnera@canandaiguaneconomy.gov](mailto:fmagnera@canandaiguaneconomy.gov) or Fax to (585) 394-2706**

**Include building address, system type, and date/time system was restored to service. In addition, the red tag shall be removed.**