



# SYRACUSE FIRE DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SYRACUSE, MAYOR BEN WALSH

## Fire Watch Requirements and Procedures

This standard shall set forth the requirements of a fire watch when a building or premises presents a hazard to life or property as the result of a fire or other emergency, or when it is determined that any fire protection equipment or life safety system is inoperable, defective, inadequate, has been taken out of service for > 8 hours in a 24-hour period.

### 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. 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 building management in the 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.

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Chief of Fire

**Daniel Downes**  
First Deputy Chief

**Richard Kesselstein**  
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## **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 (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. 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 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.

## Fire Watch Requirements

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- A. Impaired System Tag Requirements /System Out of Service Fire protection system(s) that are impaired for any length of time shall be tagged with an impairment tag.

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:

- The words "DO NOT REMOVE BY ORDER OF THE SYRACUSE FIRE DEPARTMENT
- Name, address and telephone number of the business or firm performing the testing.
- Date that work was performed.
- Printed name of person performing work.
- Description of work performed.

- B. Fire Watch personnel shall have access to at least one approved means of communication; know the exact address of the property, and the procedure to report a fire or other emergency condition by calling 911.
- C. If more than one person is conducting a fire watch, they must be able to communicate with each other (either a cell phone, portable radio, or phone line are acceptable)
- D. Fire watch personnel shall be familiar with the layout of the buildings and property. They shall become familiar with all electrical shut off devices and main power cut-offs and any other areas that may be hazardous to responding fire service personnel. 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.
- E. Fire Watch personnel must have a written plan for patrolling the property
- F. 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.
- G. Periodic patrols must be conducted of the entire facility. Patrols must occur every 15 minutes if the facility has people sleeping, is an institutional facility or an occupied assembly facility. A facility not meeting the previous conditions shall be patrolled at a minimum every 30 minutes.
- H. 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;
  - Portable fire extinguishers are in place, unobstructed and in proper operating condition
  - Corridors and exits are free and clear of storage and all other obstructions
  - Exit and stairwell doors are clear and fully operational
  - EXIT signs are visible and properly illuminated
  - 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)
  - Electrical hazards are promptly reported and remedied
  - 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)



- Trash and other unnecessary accumulations of combustibles are promptly removed from the building
- I. Fire watch personnel shall report promptly any condition that needs immediate attention; the management should correct reports of this nature immediately.
- J. Fire watch personnel shall not be permitted to perform any other duties while on duty.
- K. Fire watch personnel shall not be impaired and shall remain awake and alert at all times.
- L. If fire watch personnel discover a fire their first response is to notify the Fire Department by calling the 911 Center. Fire watch personnel will be required to report the exact location of the fire and the extent of fire involvement.
- M. Property owner shall keep a log of fire watch related activities. The log shall include; address of the facility, time of each patrol and name of the fire watch person. The completed log shall be emailed to the attention of Syracuse Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau at [FirePrevention@syr.gov.net](mailto:FirePrevention@syr.gov) or delivered daily to:

Syracuse Fire Department - Fire Prevention Bureau,  
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201 E Washington Street  
Syracuse, New York 13202  
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### **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 alarm company, the building owner/manager, and/or any supervisors or tenants in the affected areas.

The Fire Department shall be notified by sending an email message to [FirePrevention@syr.gov.net](mailto:FirePrevention@syr.gov.net). Include building address, system type, and date/time system was restored to service. In addition, the impairment tag shall be removed.

Fire Prevention Bureau  
November 2022



