



SYRACUSE FIRE DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SYRACUSE, MAYOR SHARON F. OWENS

Michael J. Monds
Chief of Fire

Elton Davis
First Deputy Chief

Lucas Tortarella
Executive Deputy Chief

Deputy Chiefs
James Farewell
Zachary Smith
Nicholas Pagano
David Munki
George Cowburn

Chief's Office
Syracuse Fire Dept.
Public Safety Building
511 S. State St.
6th Floor, Rm. 607
Syracuse, N.Y. 13202

Office 315 473 5525
Fax 315 422 7766

www.syr.gov

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

Fire Watch service is a temporary measure taken when an automatic fire protection system is impaired or becomes out-of-service, another hazardous condition exists, and/or 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 portions 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 are **NOT** the purpose of the watch and is limited to incipient-level firefighting necessary to accomplish their primary function. Additionally, the fire watch shall remain on the property, for the purpose of assisting the fire department with information and establishing contact with the owner/manager.

Scope

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.



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Protection of persons and property against the hazards of fire is a management responsibility.

The requirements of this procedure are intended to aid the facility's 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.

Type of Impairments

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 impairment.

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 for implementing several steps outlined in Chapter 9 of the Fire Code of New York State.

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The 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 inoperable sprinkler or system leakage, interruption of water supply, frozen or ruptured piping, and equipment failure are examples of emergency impairments.

Impairment Coordinator

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.

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Requirements

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.



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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 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.

Fire Watch Requirements

- Fire Protection Systems that are impaired for any length of time shall be tagged with an impairment tag. The tag or shall be clearly visible, weather resistant, of sufficient size (typically 4x6 inches), and be of the self-adhesive type or wire hanger type.
- The tag shall include the following information:
 - DO NOT REMOVE BY ORDER OF THE SYRACUSE FIRE DEPARTMENT
 - Name, address and telephone number of the business or firm performing the testing.
 - Date the work was performed.
 - Printed name of the person performing the work.
 - Description of work performed.
- 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.

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- 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)
- Fire watch personnel shall be familiar with the layout of the buildings and property and have a written plan for patrolling the property.
- Fire watch personnel shall not be permitted to perform any other duties while on duty.
- Fire watch personnel shall not be impaired and shall always remain awake and alert.
- The 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 forward daily, via email to: fireprevention@syr.gov

Or

Faxed to the Syracuse Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau at

(315) 448-4779

Or

Hand delivered to:

Syracuse Fire Department - Fire Prevention Bureau,
300 S State St, 7th Floor
Syracuse, New York 13202
315-448-4777

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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 insurance carrier, the alarm company, the building owner/manager, and/or any supervisors or tenants in the affected areas.

The Syracuse Fire Department shall be notified by sending an email message FirePrevention@syr.gov. Include building address, system type, and date/time system was restored to service. In addition, the impaired system tags shall be removed.

January 2026

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