

Fire Watch Procedures

February 29, 2024

1.0 Purpose

A fire watch is a temporary measure taken when deemed necessary by the Fire Safety Manager or OSHE Director. A fire watch shall be required if any of the following occurs:

1. The automatic fire protection or alerting system is impaired or is out of service.
2. Occupancy limits are exceeded or when overcrowding is expected.
3. The nature of the activities warrants it, or other necessary reasons.

The Fire Watch is in place to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of a building, by one or more qualified individuals. The Fire Watch personnel are responsible for identifying fire hazards, maintaining means of egress, detecting early signs of fire, activating an alarm, and notifying the fire department. According to the NFPA, for fire alarm systems, a fire watch is required if the system is impaired for more than four hours in a 24-hour period. For water-based fire protection systems, fire watches are required for impairments lasting 10 hours or more in a 24-hour period. In both cases, the fire department must be notified

2.0 Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Office of Safety, Health & Environment (OSHE)

Morgan State University (MSU) OSHE has the following responsibilities:

- The Fire Safety manager will notify the appropriate off-campus agencies, such as the Fire Department, State Treasurer's Office, etc., of a malfunctioning or planned outage of a building fire alarm and/or sprinkler system more than eight hours.
- The Fire Safety manager/ representative will notify the appropriate off-campus agencies when the inoperative building alarm and/or sprinkler system has been repaired, tested, and placed back in service.
- Shall maintain a record of the impairment for a period of 1 year from the date the impairment was corrected.
- Identify the extent and expected duration of the impairment to the alarm system.
- Provide in service training with Morgan State University Police on proper fire watch procedures.
- Notify the appropriate campus departments when a fire watch is taking place in a building. For all buildings, OSHE will notify Police & Public Safety, Design & Construction Management (DCM) and Physical Plant Department (PPD). In residence halls, OSHE will notify the Office of Residence Life & Housing (ORL&H).



- Review and file the fire watch written log.
- To revise these procedures as necessary and to make distribution to all organizations directly involved.

2.2 Office of Police & Public Safety

MSU Office of Police & Public Safety has the following responsibilities:

- Immediately notify OSHE when a signal is not received from the building fire alarm panel.
- Fire Watches are required to stay on site for at least a one hour after completion of hot work, through breaks and after hours as needed, to detect and extinguish possible smoldering fires
- Notify building occupants of the need to evacuate; if a building alarm system is functional, ensure it is activated, to assist with the evacuation.
- Prevention obstruction of means of egress. Notify the local fire department when a fire suspected or discovered.
- Conduct periodic patrols after normal hours of operations of the entire facility, hourly to ensure safety to include weekends and holidays as needed.
- Furnish the written log of a fire watch to OSHE.
- Use the emergency 911 number and provide the emergency operator with the exact address, type of emergency, and if applicable, advise the fire protection system is impaired.
- Have knowledge on the location and use of fire protection equipment, including portable fire extinguishers.
- Establish and maintain at least one means of direct communication with the 911 Emergency Communication Center.

2.3 Design & Construction Management (DCM) & Facilities Management Department (FMD)

MSU DCM and FMD the following responsibilities:

- Notify OSHE via email at least 72 hours before a fire alarm and/or sprinkler system is placed out of service and a fire watch procedure is necessary.
- Request a confirmation from OSHE confirming receipt and awareness of potential outage and fire watch.
- Make the necessary arrangements with contractors to provide a fire watch. The contractors are responsible for implementing their own fire watch, during normal hours of operation. This includes providing their own equipment, extinguishers and personnel.
- Immediately notify OSHE of any problems concerning the implementation of a fire watch.

3.0 Fire Watch Standards

NFPA 101 2018 Section 3.3.108 Fire Watch. The assignment of a person or persons to an area for the express purpose of notifying the fire department, the building occupants, or both of an emergency;



preventing a fire from occurring; extinguishing small fires; or protecting the public from fire or life safety dangers. Extinguishing small fires; or protecting the public from fire or life safety dangers.

NFPA 101-2018 Section 9.11.2 Sprinkler system impairment procedures must comply with NFPA 25-2017 edition.

NFPA 25 2017 A.15.5.2(4)(b) A fire watch should consist of trained personnel who continuously patrol the affected area. Ready access to fire extinguishers and the ability to promptly notify the fire department are important items to consider. During the patrol of the area, the person should not only be looking for fire, but making sure that the other fire protection features of the building such as egress routes and alarm systems are available and functioning properly.

* The term “**out of service**” in **NFPA 101-2018 Section 9.6.2.6** is intended to imply that a significant portion of the fire alarm system is not in operation, such as an entire initiating device, signaling line, or notification appliance circuit. It is not the intent of the Code to require notification of the authority having jurisdiction, or evacuation of the portion of the building affected, for a single non-operating device or appliance.

4.0 Fire Watch Procedures

The individual conducting the periodic inspections of the impairment area(s) is called the Fire Watch. The Fire Watch shall continually make rounds through all affected areas and buildings. The following subsections provide the fire watch procedures.

4.1 General Requirements

Requirements of the fire watch include:

- The individual performing the fire watch shall have no other duties or assigned responsibilities for the duration of the fire watch.
- The individual performing the fire watch shall patrol all floors and public areas of the building.
- The individual performing the fire watch shall have immediate access to a telephone and shall have the ability to communicate effectively verbally.
- The individual performing the fire watch shall have immediate access to a fire extinguisher and shall have completed training on proper fire extinguisher use.
- The individual performing the fire watch must be informed of the required location of the fire watch and know the location of fire alarm pull stations.
- Fire watch shall patrol high-hazard areas of protected buildings every 30 minutes. High-hazard areas will be identified by the fire safety office.

4.2 Fire Watch Documentation

Log entries shall be made hourly at the completion of each round. Log entries shall consist of the date and time the round was completed, any necessary comments, and the name of the individual conducting the fire watch. This Fire Watch Log is to be maintained on the premises until the re-establishment of the



building's fire alarm system. A copy of this log is to be submitted to the Office of Safety, Health & Environment. Logs will be collected each morning by the Office of Health and Safety from MSUPD dispatch.

- Address and name of facility.
- Name of person(s) on duty conducting the fire watch.
- Date and time of fire watch duty.
- Record of communication(s) with the Fire safety office and alarm monitoring company, including time(s) and nature of communication if an incident occurred.

4.3 In the Event of a Fire

If a fire is discovered, the fire watch should immediately:

- 1. Activate the building fire alarm system.**
- 2. Evacuate.**
- 3. Contact 911 to report the location and cause of the alarm.**

4.4 Ending a Fire Watch

A fire watch will end only after the alarm deficiencies have been repaired or ALL occupants have been relocated to another facility. Once it has been determined that the system is fully functional; Only the Fire Safety Manager or a member of the OSHE Fire Safety Team (After consulting with the manager or Director) may remove a facility from fire watch. The OSHE team member must verify that any necessary inspections and test have been conducted to the affected system, to ensure it is operational. OSHE will remove the impairment tag from the affected system.

