



# OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL



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## FIRE WATCH PROCEDURES

Although the state fire code requires fire alarms in certain occupancies, there may be times during the life of the occupancy that the fire alarm becomes inoperative or is absent. This occurs in the cases of new construction and remodeling, and it also may be the result of an emergency situation such as a lightning strike.

Every effort shall be made by the owner to make the system operational and code conforming. To this end, the following procedure will allow occupancy of a building while the fire alarm installation is progressing. This is a temporary situation and the use of a "Fire Watch" may not be extended without permission and approval of the State Fire Marshal.

1. A written request shall be forwarded to the State Fire Marshal for approval prior to the use of a Fire Watch in lieu of an operational fire alarm system in state, county and public school facilities.
2. Such written requests shall provide the following information for use by the State Fire Marshal to ascertain the suitability of a Fire Watch for any occupancy.
  - A. What is the current configuration of the fire alarm system? Is it fully automatic or manual?
  - B. How many control panels report to the main panel?
  - C. To what extent is the system inoperative?
  - D. When do you expect to have the system fully operational?
  - E. Who is providing the work to bring the system into compliance?
  - F. Have fire alarm plans been submitted to the State Fire Marshal? Have they been approved?
3. Requests to use a Fire Watch shall include a proposal to provide the following elements:
  - A. A spotter, who shall be the employee of a fire department, police department or a licensed and bonded security company, shall be stationed in an appropriate place relative to each building to observe building openings.
    - (1) Such spotters shall have no other function to distract them including, but not limited to, security, lesson plans, answering the phone, playground supervision, etc.
    - (2) Spotters shall be equipped with communication equipment that allows full time communication with a central control point (security or main office, etc.)

- (3) Spotters shall be given printed instructions (approved by the State Fire Marshal) and a training session prior to their deployment.

## Fire Watch Procedures

- B. The head of security will directly supervise spotters or school principal's designee or other supervisory individual with the authority to properly supervise the Fire Watch. Back-up supervision shall be provided as approved by the State Fire Marshal.
4. No construction work shall be performed within any building with a nonfunctional fire alarm while students or staff occupies it.
5. Local fire suppression authorities shall be advised of the situation and shall be kept informed of the status of the fire alarm system.
6. On-site guard services shall be employed after hours if required by the contractor or building manager or owner.
7. All fire lanes and exits shall be maintained in an unobstructed and useable condition.
8. The following hazards which are part of the normal occupancy of the building shall be eliminated in each building with a non-functioning fire alarm system:
  - A. Flammable and combustible liquids (cleaning materials, paints, copier and printing chemicals, etc.)
  - B. Smoking shall not be permitted in any area.
  - C. Welding and other 'hot' or open flame processes shall NOT be permitted.
9. The written proposal shall summarize the activities of all involved personnel and shall be approved by the State Fire Marshal before implementation. An on site visit by the State Fire Marshal shall be conducted to ascertain the conformance with acceptable Fire Watch practices.