



NIH Division of the Fire Marshal

Administrative Interpretation 19-2

Fire Watch Procedures

Code references: NFPA 1 (2018), NFPA 25 (2014), NFPA 51B (2019) NFPA 101 (2018), and NFPA 241 (2019)

Background: Administrative Interpretation 17-3, Fire Watch Program, summarizes the circumstances under which a fire watch is required. This interpretation establishes the procedures to be followed by fire watch personnel, the equipment they must carry, and the training they must have. The 2019 edition of NFPA 51B raised the fire watch period to 1 hour.

Interpretation:

1. Fire Watch Duties:

- a. Walk all areas assigned and perform only duties related to fire watch
- b. In health care and ambulatory care areas, follow the Clinical Center ILSM Policy
- c. Document all fire watch walks, times, and results
- d. At intervals listed below, in assigned fire watch areas, verify that:
 - o Egress routes and doors remain clear, unobstructed, and unlocked
 - o Exit signs and alarm pull stations remain visible and unobstructed
 - o Ordinary and emergency lighting remain in service
 - o Fire protection features (fire doors, alarms, sprinklers, etc.) remain in service except those covered by DFM-approved shutdown requests
 - o Fire extinguishers remain charged, accessible, and unobstructed
 - o Signage remains in place and unobstructed (out-of-service fire protection devices, modified egress routes, etc.)
 - o Ignition sources & combustible materials are limited
 - o Trash is removed in a timely manner
- e. Report deficiencies that cannot be immediately corrected during the fire watch walk
- f. Notify DFM of any correction difficulties encountered
- g. Hot work:
 - o Diligently look for fire, smoke, or hazardous conditions in hot work area, adjacent spaces, and level immediately below.
 - o Check fire extinguishers in hot work area and level immediately below

3. Fire watch frequency and duration:

- a. Hot work: Continuously during hot work through least 1 hour after hot work complete; 2 hours after completion of torch-applied roofing; up to 3 additional hours when DFM inspector deems necessary
- b. Other: At maximum 4 hour intervals for established duration
- c. As otherwise directed by the DFM based on the situation

4. Steps to take at first sign of fire, smoke, or other hazardous condition:

NOTE: In patient care areas, follow code red procedures

- a. Rescue anyone in immediate danger, if possible to do so safely
- b. Activate fire alarm (if available) or notify occupants from a safe location
- c. Confine the incident by closing doors
- d. Use fire extinguisher if you are properly trained and it is safe to do so
- e. Evacuate to a safe location
- f. Notify fire department, even if it appears the condition has been mitigated

5. Equipment fire watch personnel must carry:

- a. Identification as assigned fire watch personnel
- b. Radio or phone to make emergency calls and notifications
- c. Flashlight
- d. Keys for all areas assigned
- e. Checklist to document all activities, deficiencies, and notifications (sample attached)
- f. Personal protective equipment appropriate for areas assigned
- g. Whistle or portable air horn (if fire alarm is out of service in area assigned)

6. Fire watch personnel shall be trained in:

- a. The fire watch purpose, the area assigned, all its egress routes, and all its fire protection features and systems
- b. How to document fire watch activities and report deficiencies
- c. How to notify occupants and report incidents to the fire department
- d. Safe use of fire extinguishers (such as offered by the NIH Fire Department), if part of assigned duties
- e. In health care areas, ILSM and CRA procedures (ORF Joint Commission training)
- f. Basic fire prevention practices (at least 1 hour, such as included in ORF Joint Commission training for Building 10)

Supersedes: Administrative Interpretation 17-6, revised 07/10/18

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Date Issued 6/12/19 **Fire Marshal** M. Chibbaro

NIH Fire Watch Checklist (Sample)

Date:	Start Time:	Finish Time:
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√	Issue to Check	Deficiency	Party Notified
	Egress routes and doors remain clear, unobstructed, and unlocked		
	Exit signs and alarm pull stations remain visible and unobstructed		
	Ordinary and emergency lighting remain in service		
	Fire protection features (fire doors, alarms, sprinklers, etc.) remain in service		
	Fire extinguishers remain charged, accessible, and unobstructed		
	Signage remains in place and unobstructed (out-of-service fire protection devices, modified egress routes, etc.)		
	Ignition sources & combustible materials are limited		
	Trash is removed in a timely manner		

Other Comments:

Print Name _____ Signature _____

Emergency Numbers for Bethesda Campus:

- 911 from an NIH landline
- 301-496-9911 from a cell phone

NFPA excerpts provided for convenience

(Highlights by DFM; green highlights are new or revised)

NFPA 1 (2018)

1.7.17 Standby and Fire Watch Personnel.

1.7.17.3* Such standby fire personnel or fire watch personnel shall be subject to the AHJ's orders at all times and shall be identifiable and remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public, when such activity is being conducted, or as required by the AHJ.

A.1.7.17.3 Before each performance or the start of such activity, such individuals should inspect the required fire appliances provided to see that they are properly located and in good working order, and should keep diligent watch for fires during the time such place is open to the public or such activity is being conducted and take prompt measures for extinguishment of fires that can occur.

NFPA 101 (2018)

9.6.1.5 Fire alarm system impairment procedures shall comply with NFPA 72.

[no annex material]

NFPA 72 (2019)

10.21.5* Where required by the authority having jurisdiction, mitigating measures shall be implemented for the period that the system is impaired.

A.10.21.5 The need for mitigating measures is typically determined on a case-by-case basis. This considers the building, occupancy type, nature and duration of impairment, building occupancy level during impairment period, active work being conducted on the fire alarm system during the impairment, condition of other fire protection systems and features (i.e., sprinklers, structural compartmentation, etc.), and hazards and assets at risk.

Appropriate mitigating measures range from simple occupant notification to full-time fire watch.

Determining factors vary from testing-related impairments and maintenance activities during normal business through extensive impairments to high-value, high-hazard situations.

NFPA 25 (2015)

15.5* Preplanned Impairment Programs.

15.5.1 All preplanned impairments shall be authorized by the impairment coordinator.

15.5.2 Before authorization is given, the impairment coordinator shall be responsible for verifying that the following procedures have been implemented:

(4) Where a fire protection system is out of service for more than 10 hours in a 24-hour period, the impairment coordinator shall arrange for one of the following:

(a) Evacuation of the building or portion of the building affected by the system out of service

(b)*An approved fire watch

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.

(c)*Establishment of a temporary water supply

(d)*Establishment and implementation of an approved program to eliminate potential ignition sources and limit the amount of fuel available to the fire

A.15.5.2(4)(d) Depending on the use and occupancy of the building, it could be enough in some circumstances to stop certain processes in the building or to cut off the flow of fuel to some machines. It is also helpful to implement "No Smoking" and "No Hot Work" (cutting, grinding, or welding) policies while the system is out of service because these activities are responsible for many fire ignitions.

(5) The fire department has been notified.

(6) The insurance carrier, the alarm company, property owner or designated representative, and other authorities having jurisdiction have been notified.

(7) The supervisors in the areas to be affected have been notified.

(8) A tag impairment system has been implemented. (See Section 15.3.)

(9) All necessary tools and materials have been assembled on the impairment site.

NFPA 241 (2019)

9.3* Single-Ply and Torch-Applied Roofing Systems.

9.3.9* Fire Watch. A fire watch shall be conducted for at least 2 hours after torches have been extinguished.

A.9.3.9 All roof areas under repair should be checked for hot spots and signs of smoldering. The inside of the building also should be inspected for signs of fire or smoke. Particular attention should be paid to cants, flashings, and areas around penetrations such as vent pipes, air vents, and skylights. Where available, infrared scanners should be used to detect hot spots. All fires should be reported to the fire department, even when extinguished. Smoldering can continue after extinguishment, can occur for hours before flaming begins, and can occur in areas unsuspected by laypersons. (Also see A.5.1.1.)

NFPA 51B (2019)

5.6.1.1 A fire watch shall be maintained for 1 hour after completion of hot work operations in order to detect and extinguish smoldering fires

5.6.1.2 The duration of the fire watch shall be permitted to be extended if the PAI determines the fire hazards warrant the extension.

5.6.2* More than one fire watch shall be required if combustible materials that could be ignited by the hot work operation cannot be directly observed by the initial fire watch.

N 5.6.3* Following the completion of the established fire watch time period, fire monitoring shall be provided within the hot work area for up to an additional 3 hours as determined by the PAI.