

Alabama Department of Public Health, Technical Services Unit

Fire Watch Procedure

Revised 07/01/2020

FIRE ALARM OR SPRINKLER SYSTEM OUTAGES

The procedure for health care facilities to follow when **1)** a fire alarm system is out of service for more than 4 hours in a 24-hour period, or when **2)** a fire sprinkler system is out of service for more than 10 hours in a 24-hour period, is based on requirements of The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the 2012 Edition of NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code*, paragraphs 9.6.1.6 and 9.7.6. A fire watch must be implemented if evacuation of the building is not an option. Paragraph 9.7.6 requires compliance with NFPA 25, *Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems* (2011 Edition). NFPA 25, Chapter 15, "Impairments," requires an individual to be designated the Impairment Coordinator.

1. NOTIFY TECHNICAL SERVICES. If the situation is discovered during a *Life Safety Code* survey, the facility may be in an Immediate Jeopardy situation until the administration can give the surveyor, or email to lifesafety@adph.state.al.us Technical Services in Montgomery, a written plan of action stating how and when the fire alarm or sprinkler system is expected to be back in service. If the situation occurs at other times, the facility must report the situation, with the written plan of action, to Technical Services.

2. NOTIFY FACILITY STAFF. The Administrator shall email to lifesafety@adph.state.al.us Technical Services a copy of the memo that was given to the facility staff, telling them how to respond to a fire situation at the facility (since the automatic fire alarm or sprinkler system does not work). The staff must be instructed to keep smoke and fire doors, including those normally held open with magnets, closed until the fire alarm or sprinkler system has been made operational.

3. FIRE WATCH APPROVAL. The *Life Safety Code* requires the evacuation of the facility, or implementation of an approved fire watch. The Administrator must implement a fire watch plan which has the written approval of the local Fire Chief or Fire Marshal. Email the approved fire watch plan to Technical Services.

4. ACCEPTABLE PLAN. Once this has been received and approved by Technical Services or by the surveyor, the facility is no longer in Jeopardy and the Scope and Severity can be lowered. If the surveyor is on site, he may leave the facility once the approved fire watch has been implemented.

5. FIRE WATCH ACTIVITY. The purpose of a fire watch is to watch for fires, which would ordinarily be detected by the fire alarm or sprinkler system. The Administrator or Impairment Coordinator must use extra individuals who have been brought in to do only the fire watch. These individuals cannot be doing other work, such as housekeeping, patient care, or maintenance work. The fire watch person shall be assigned to do nothing other than walking through the facility, checking all rooms and attic spaces for fires, and signing a log every 15 to 30 minutes.

6. FIRE WATCH LOG: The facility shall email to Technical Services a copy of the sign-in log for the fire watch every 24 hours until the problem has been corrected. Night and weekend logs

may be faxed during normal Monday - Friday office hours. **Email a statement to Technical Services giving the time and date the system was put back in service.**

Contact Technical Services at 334-206-5177 if you need more information.