

Office of Fire Safety

Fire Watch Duties & Responsibilities

Purpose

Occasionally facilities are found that are substantially out of compliance with applicable fire safety rules. A fire watch may be an acceptable alternative to strict code compliance in order to allow continued occupancy for a specific limited time period. The authority for continued occupancy of a non compliant regulated facility lies with the Office of Fire Safety (OFS).

Intent

It is the intent of this document to provide direction for selection, requirements, training and duties of personnel who will perform fire watch duties within Act 207 regulated facilities.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Provide the applicable Office of Fire Safety field office with an acceptable written plan of correction for all areas of non compliance including a proposed date for correction.
- B. Provide the OFS field office with an acceptable site-specific written fire response plan.
- C. Personnel assigned to a fire watch may be assigned other duties than those required for a fire watch, however, these other duties shall not compromise fire watch duties.
- D. Procedures and instructions for personnel assigned to a fire watch shall be specific with respect to duty responsibilities and actions required
- E. Personnel assigned to fire watch duties shall have the skills and ability to perform prescribed duties.
- F. Personnel assigned to a fire watch shall be trained to ensure that they are familiar with the following:
 1. All buildings, occupancies and hazards involved.
 2. Facility fire protection systems

3. Facility manual and automatic detection and alarm systems
 4. Use of portable fire protection equipment
 5. The facility site-specific fire response plan.
- G. A communications system shall be provided to all fire watch participants for notification of any condition which may affect life and/or property safety.
1. Approved communications systems:
 - a. Telephones
 - b. Cellular telephones
 - c. Radios
 - d. Training in operating procedures for a-c above.
 2. A constantly attended communications center within the facility shall be maintained to receive an emergency signal or call which may require notification of the local fire department and building occupants
 3. A continuously updated directory of names, telephone numbers and other information to assist in making emergency calls shall be made available

FIRE WATCH FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

- A. Rounds of all areas subject to the fire watch shall be conducted not less than once per hour with specific frequency to be determined by the OFS field inspector.
- B. Personnel shall not leave their assigned areas except in an emergency. In such cases, they shall notify the communication center.
- C. The first round of patrol is very important to gain familiarization with the patrol site and should include monitoring the following:
 - a. Windows and fire doors closed
 - b. All oily waste, rags, paint residue, rubbish and other combustibles removed from the building or reported
 - c. All fire protection equipment in place and not obstructed
 - d. Aisles clear
 - e. All secured offices, conference rooms, and smoking areas checked for carelessly discarded smoking materials
 - f. All gas and electric heaters, and other heating devices in open or unsecured areas on the premises checked
 - g. Flammable and combustible materials properly stored in approved containers or storage areas

- h. All sprinkler valves open and sealed, with gauges indicating normal pressures. If not open, that fact should be reported immediately.
- i. Special attention should be given to areas under construction.

D. Examples of duties of fire watch personnel include:

- 1. Detecting conditions likely to cause a fire, such as leaks or spills of flammable liquids and fault equipment
- 2. Detecting conditions that reduce the effectiveness with which a fire can be controlled, such as sprinkler valves not open, obstructed sprinkler heads, water supplies impaired, or portable fire extinguishers not in place or in working order.
- 3. Making patrols along routes to ensure surveillance of the areas in question at appropriate intervals.
- 4. Discovery of fire and appropriate response.
 - a) Upon discovery of fire the fire watch member shall immediately transmit the fire location to the communications center or the fire department with jurisdiction pursuant to the facility site-specific fire response plan.
 - b) Upon discovery of a fire and after reporting pursuant to the facility site-specific fire response plan, fire watch personnel shall make reasonable efforts to combat the fire using portable fire extinguishing equipment.

E. Daily report form

- 1. A daily fire watch log shall include a summary of rounds including name, time and date as well as any violations or unusual events encountered by fire watch personnel on their shift.
- 2. Examples of typical fire watch daily log comments include:
 - a. Fires in progress or property damaged?
 - b. Stations missed?
 - c. Rule violations?
 - d. Corridors obstructed?
 - e. Doors/windows open?
 - f. Fire equipment missing or inoperative?
 - g. Sprinkler system defects found?
 - h. Areas unsecured?
 - i. Exits obstructed/blocked?
 - j. Fire door blocked or inoperative?
 - k. Smoking violations discovered?
 - l. Other events noted?
- 3. A copy of the daily fire watch log shall be faxed daily to the local Office of Fire Safety for review. Continued approval of the use of a fire watch is contingent upon facility management documenting that a thorough fire watch is being conducted.