

FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT & SYSTEM IMPAIRMENT BEST PRACTICES

In the life of a building, there will be times when the fire protection, detection, and alerting systems will be inoperable. The cause can be planned or unplanned. Planned outages include routine inspection or maintenance, upgrades to the system, or extending the system. Unplanned outages may be due to a fire, damage, lightning strikes, or delayed repairs. Whatever the reason, certain actions are needed when a system is out of service.

New Jersey's Fire Code (F-504.5) requires the following actions be taken:

- Notify the local fire department – Fire departments preplan buildings. One of the priorities in buildings with automatic fire sprinkler systems is to position a first responding pumper to the sprinkler connection. Different apparatus positioning may be needed if the sprinkler system is out of order.
- Notifying the local Fire Official – The Fire Official is the link between the community and the fire department.
- Post signs at the fire department connection and main sprinkler valves.

In addition to the minimum actions, additional best practices include:

- Notify occupants – Emergency Action Plans assume that sprinkler protection is in place. Buildings with sprinkler systems may have longer exit travel distances, less compartmentalization, and lower fire-resistive building components. These features can significantly impact occupant safety when the sprinkler system is not working. Occupants should be alerted to this temporary condition. Occupants should also be advised to be more vigilant and react quickly to situations.

When an automatic fire detection/alerting system is out of service, this can add a significant delay in initiating a complete evacuation. Alternative alerting measures, such as telephones, runners, etc., may need to be implemented.

- Prohibit heat-producing activities – Hot work (such as welding, oxy-acetylene cutting, using propane to repair roof membranes, sweating pipes, etc.) should not be allowed while a fire protection system(s) is out of service.
- Most buildings prohibit candles, space heaters, and similar devices under normal conditions. If not, they should be prohibited during the outage.
- Consider alternative life safety measures:
 - Identify Fire Marshals who will act as a point of contact between authorities and occupants in the Marshal's assigned area of responsibility.
 - Establish a fire watch to make periodic and regular patrols of the building. Please view the [Video Briefing- Fire Watch Best Practices](#) for additional information.
 - Position additional fire extinguishers to reduce travel distances.
- Work closely with your contractor to minimize the duration of the shutdown.