

FIRE WATCH GUIDE

Version	Date	Comments
1	January, 2011	Initial <i>Fire Watch Guide</i>
2	May 2013	Routine review
3	November, 2015	Update code citation - SFPC 2012
4	July, 2017	Routine review
5	July, 2019	Routine review

A. INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) 901.7 and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 72 mandate that a “fire watch” be implemented whenever a fire suppression or fire alarm system is out of service or compromised. Notification must be made to the Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHS) when a fire suppression or fire alarm system is out of service, under repair, or otherwise inoperable to determine if a fire watch is warranted.

B. SCOPE

This Guide applies to all Mason employees and contractors performing work in university-owned buildings. Fire watch requirements for system outages and impairments will be determined on a case by case basis taking into consideration the extent of the interruption, building use, number of expected occupants, and expected duration of the interruption. Upon notification of a fire suppression or fire alarm outage, EHS - Fire Safety personnel are responsible for determining the appropriate type of fire watch.

One Day Fire Watch: A fire watch that can be terminated at the end of the work shift; all alarm and suppression systems are restored to normal operations when the works shift is complete.

Long Term Fire Watch: A fire watch that extends across multiple work shifts or overnight to accommodate complex or lengthy systems repairs, maintenance, or upgrades. During a *Long Term Fire Watch*, fire watch must be conducted during all hours that the building is occupied. .

C. RESPONSIBILITIES

Facilities Project Managers, Facilities Inspectors, Facilities Management Supervisors, or other facilities management personnel (i.e., Housing and Residence Life, Student Centers, or Intercollegiate Athletics, etc.) are responsible for establishing a fire watch for the buildings which they oversee whenever a system fails or maintenance and/or repairs are necessary. EHS shall be responsible for conducting a fire watch during any scheduled fire alarm or fire suppression system test, maintenance, or repair, conducted or coordinated by EHS. These

agencies are responsible for ensuring that the fire watch is conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in this guide.

Environmental Health and Safety Office - Fire Safety

- EHS is responsible for overseeing fire watch procedures conducted in university buildings to include inspection of fire watch operations and fire watch logs maintained by employees and contractors responsible for conducting fire watch.
- EHS will advise George Mason University Facilities Management or Facilities Administration personnel on fire watch procedures whenever a *Long Term Fire Watch* is warranted.
- Notify State Fire Marshal when a Fire Watch is implemented.

Facilities Management and Facilities Administration

- Facilities Management and Facilities Administration are responsible for coordinating a meeting with EHS – Fire Safety whenever a *Long Term Fire Watch* is warranted. This meeting (virtual or physical) must take place before fire watch may be implemented.

D. NOTIFICATION

One Day Fire Watch

Whenever scheduled repairs demand that a fire suppression or fire alarm system be taken out of service, notification must be made by submitting an outage request to Facilities Management Customer Service.

Long Term Fire Watch

When it is discovered that a fire suppression or fire alarm system is inoperable due to damage, utility failure, system failure, or operates improperly, EHS must be notified. Additionally, a meeting with EHS-Fire Safety must occur to discuss the severity of the outage, responsible parties for fire watch, and plans for rectification of the issue. When reporting such an outage, include the following information:

- Location of the system,
- System(s) impacted and corresponding areas of coverage,
- Anticipated duration of the outage,
- Suspected reason for the outage if know, and
- Name and contact information.

E. PROCEDURES

Every fire watch is different in regards to scope and scale. In general, fire watch should be conducted in areas of a building that have an impaired fire safety system. If there are any questions about the scope and/or scale of a fire watch, EHS-Fire Safety should be consulted.

All *Long Term Fire Watch* requires a meeting with EHS-Fire Safety to discuss scope and duties of the person conducting fire watch.

A fire watch is defined as, “the assignment of a qualified person or persons for the express purpose of notifying the fire department, the building occupants, or both of an emergency; preventing a fire from occurring; extinguishing small fires; or protecting the public from fire or life safety dangers”. The responsibilities of an individual assigned to fire watch duty is to fulfill the intent of NFPA-72 as follows:

- Notify occupants to evacuate when there is a fire in the building.
- Notify 911 to initiate emergency personnel response.
- Activate fire protection systems (if available and operational) in order to release door holders, close smoke dampers, and shut down fans.
- The persons performing this type of fire watch are not to be permitted to perform any other duties (SFPC 901.7). EHS-Fire Safety personnel are to be responsible for determining the procedures to be followed for each specific circumstance.

Individuals assigned to fire watch duty are responsible for the following:

1. Post signage (Appendix A) throughout the building to notify occupants that a fire watch is being conducted and the appropriate response if a fire or smoke is discovered.
2. Have an understanding of basic fire prevention and fire extinguishment techniques.
3. Be proficient in the operation of the fire alarm and suppression system the area(s) impacted by the outage.
4. Have an understanding of and the ability (i.e., access to a phone, cell phone, or radio) to immediately contact 911 in case of an emergency or fire.
5. Conduct a routine and thorough walk of all locations impacted by the system outage at least once per hour.
6. Note the location of portable fire extinguishers.
7. Notifying occupants to evacuate the building in the event of a fire by verbal warning, whistle, horn, or other notification device.
8. Fire watch personnel are to have fire extinguishing equipment readily available and be trained in its use.
9. Maintain a log of activities, findings, and incidents throughout the fire watch using the Fire Watch Checklist (see Appendix B).
10. Remove fire watch signage once the fire watch is complete.
11. Witness and acknowledge that both the fire suppression and alarm systems are fully operation and back online with notification made to University Police Dispatch prior to leaving the facility.

Attention Occupants

FIRE WATCH IN PROGRESS

**Fire alarm or sprinkler system is out-of-service
for repairs, construction, or maintenance.**

Qualified individuals are conducting a continuous tour of common areas to provide smoke and/or fire detection. Please be alert to evidence of smoke or fire. Contact **911** immediately if fire is seen or suspected.

**Evacuate the building immediately upon hearing an air horn,
whistle, or other alert.**

Appendix B: Fire Watch Checklist

Fire Watch Checklist					
Building:			Date:		
Expected Duration System Outage (include days and/or hours):					
Means of Notifying Building Occupants (i.e. verbal command, whistle, horn):					
Fire Watch Personnel					
1st Watch Hours:	Name:	Phone Number:			
2nd Watch Hours:	Name:	Phone Number:			
3rd Watch Hours:	Name:	Phone Number:			
Area(s) That Require a Fire Watch					
Building:	Floor:	Area:			
	Floor:	Area:			
	Floor:	Area:			
	Floor:	Area:			
Fire Watch Patrol Log: <i>Patrol of affected areas must be conducted at least hourly</i>					
Time 1		Time 7		Time 13	
Time 2		Time 8		Time 14	
Time 3		Time 9		Time 15	
Time 4		Time 10		Time 16	
Time 5		Time 11		Time 17	
Time 6		Time 12		Time 18	
Comments					
Project Completion Date:			Signature:		