

# Fire Watch Requirements: When and How to Perform a Fire Watch

LOS ALAMITOS, CA, UNITED STATES, May 26, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Property owners are generally directed by a fire marshal or required by law to conduct a fire watch. A fire watch is a process designed to identify and control fire hazards. It also entails activating the fire alarm, notifying the building occupants, alerting the fire department, and facilitating the evacuation of occupants in case of a fire incident. The goal is to ensure safety and prevent and mitigate fire hazards.



Fire Watch Requirements

The importance of a fire watch cannot be denied. The question remaining is when and how to perform a fire watch. In order to answer this question, one must be familiar with the fire watch requirements set by International Fire Code (IFC).

## Basic Fire Watch Requirements

A fire watch may be mandated for the following four reasons as specified by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard and IFC.

### 1. Impaired Fire Alarm/ Fire Suppression System

Does the property have a fire alarm or a water-based fire protection system such as sprinklers? If yes, then the property may be required to implement a fire watch to remain compliant with the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code if the alarm or the protection system becomes impaired.

A fire watch is usually required if the fire alarm system is out for more than 4 hours in 24 hours. A common misconception regarding the fire requirement is that a fire watch is invoked if the system is out of order for 4 consecutive hours. In reality, a fire watch is required if the system is disarmed or impaired for a total of 4 hours or more in 24 hours.

On the other hand, a fire watch is required for water-based fire protection systems if the system is impaired for at least 10 hours in a period of 24 hours. The same goes in the case of a

preplanned power outage.

Generally, the property owners are required to inform the fire marshal of such plans or activities beforehand. However, keep in mind that the exact guidelines vary from one jurisdiction to another. Therefore, it is recommended to check in with a local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) to understand the local requirements.

## 2. Hot Works in the Building

A fire watch is required when performing hot work in the building. Hot work includes all tasks and activities that involve the use of spark or flame. A few examples would include works like welding, cutting, grinding, using a torch, etc.

Even with the fire alarms and fire suppression systems working properly, it is best to perform a fire watch when hot works are occurring in the building, as hot works are identified as one of the lead causes of fire incidents, especially industrial fires. A little precaution goes a long way!

The fire watch requirements specify that a fire watch is required during and 30 minutes after the hot works end on-site to ensure complete safety. The site manager or fire official holds the authority to extend the fire watch depending on the nature of work or potential fire hazards on site. However, areas with no combustible materials on-site or zero fire hazards may be exempted from fire watch during or after hot works.

## 3. Construction/Renovation/Demolition Work

Construction, renovation, and demolition work increase the risk of fire hazards. According to a [report issued by NFPA](#), "Local fire departments responded to an estimated average of 4,300 fires in structures under construction per year in 2016 through 2020. The fires in structures under construction caused an average of four civilian deaths, 62 civilian injuries, and \$376 million in direct property damage annually."

Fires can quickly spiral out of control at a construction/demolition site. In most cases, the fire alarm is either disconnected or not installed at all. The water supply may also be turned off, further adding to the problem. The alarming statistics point towards the need to ensure fire watch during planned construction, major renovation, or demolition.

Keep in mind that according to the revised IFC, a fire watch is mandatory even during non-working hours if the new construction is taller than 40 feet (12,192 mm) or exceeds 50,000 square feet in area.

## 4. Dense Crowds

Crowded or packed buildings are often deemed at a higher risk of meeting a fire incident.

Moreover, the evacuation is seldom seamless due to the larger crowds. Therefore, your AHJ may require you to take additional measures and ensure a fire watch if the property is densely crowded.

This fire watch requirement is customarily applicable to public assembly buildings holding exhibitions, concerts, performances, displays, contests, or other similar activities involving several people.

In other words, the fire watch requirement also depends on the nature of the event taking place at the facility and the expected number of people attending the said event. The fire watch personnel are required to stay on duty until the area is open to the public.

### Trained Fire Watchers Maximum Safety

It may be tempting to conduct the assessment internally and save a few bucks on hiring professionals. However, if one is not familiar with the [fire watch duties](#) and responsibilities of the fire watch, the process is unlikely to be effective, leaving the owner and property exposed to potential fire hazards. Therefore, a better approach is to hire a fire watch personnel mandated by OSHA.

A highly competent [fire watch team](#) that is trained for the job and has a thorough understanding of their duties and responsibilities is a good idea. Remember, performing a fire watch is not only about compliance with rules and regulations. The real goal is to keep the premises safe and protect people.

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