WEST COUNTY EMS & FIRE
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Fire Alarm Permits

Modifications to Existing Systems

If the work is in an existing multi-tenant Type I or Type II building, the building may have an optional Master Building Permit. Please read the Master Building Permit guide for more details as it can affect the need to obtain a Sprinkler Permit.

With the exception of the criteria established for Master Building Permits, the installation, relocation or modification of an existing system falls under 3 categories based on scope. They are:

Maintenance repair or replacement of any number of devices with no panel replacement: No permit or inspection is required

4 devices or less added or relocated with no panel replacement: No permit or inspection is required

5 devices added, relocated or any work involving replacement of an alarm panel: A permit is required and the system will be inspected for proper installation, monitoring time response and strobe synchronization.

New Systems

A permit is required and the system will be inspected for proper installation, monitoring response time and strobe synchronization. Also, any other relevant NFPA 72 requirements may be tested at the discretion of the inspector.

For new systems installed on or after January 1, 2015 or for systems where a change of provider is made on or after January 1, 2015, West County EMS & Fire requires the alarm monitoring service to be UL Listed.

All new fire alarm systems shall be owned and maintained solely by the building owner and not any tenant.

Requirements for all systems

Alarm testing requiring witnessed testing (as determined by the inspector) shall be scheduled and conducted between the hours of 8:30AM and 5PM Monday thru Friday. Off-hour inspections and testing are not available.

In lieu of a witnessed test, the Fire Marshal ***may*** elect to accept a completed and signed NFPA 72 Record of Completion form as applicable to the scope of work for the permit. Any random testing or incidental witnessed operation of the alarm system that reveals faulty devices or products or questionable

workmanship may cause the inspector to suspend the ability to accept the NFPA 72 Record of Completion in lieu of witnessed tests.

At the final inspection, the permit holder shall have a signed and fully completed NFPA 72 Record of Completion AND a printed Alarm Signal Report showing the complete testing of all detection and supervisory devices installed, replaced or modified with the permit and the restoral for each with the corresponding date and time. The alarm signal report shall also show the device name. This report shall be generated from the alarm monitoring service central station.

New alarm systems and alarm systems in new buildings or significant additions will be tested for proper monitoring response and 911 address. In such a case, the alarm system must NOT be called out of service in advance, as it is essential to capture and test the monitoring company's response when they do not have prior notice of a test.

It is imperative that fire alarm systems not be unnecessarily sounded as nuisance alarms encourage distrust or disregard for the alarm system in an actual emergency. In buildings such as multi-tenant office buildings and medical facilities such as hospitals, alarm testing and certification should be done in as concise of a manner as possible.

New fire alarm systems and any alarm system subject to a Fire Alarm Permit shall be consolidated into a single fire alarm panel that is owned and maintained by the building owner. No new tenant-owned fire alarm systems will be permitted or authorized. At such time as any tenant vacates where there is/was an existing tenant-maintained fire alarm system, the fire alarm system shall be required to be assumed and maintained by the building owner.

Synchronization of Strobes

Synchronization of strobes in a commercial building is essential to minimize negative impacts to persons with various medical conditions, including epilepsy and diagnoses on the autism spectrum. Per NFPA 72 requirements and District requirements, all strobes that flash directly or indirectly in the view (including peripheral vision) of an occupant shall be synchronized. This shall include synchronization of strobes between separated spaces where glass walls, doors ("borrowed light") or windows allow the device or its flash to be seen in combination with any other device or its flash. This metric shall not apply if the flash can only be seen momentarily while a normally closed door is open while a person is in passage from one space to another.

Common synchronization issues are found where synchronization conflicts between a suite and a common hallway or lobby or in exit stairwells where strobes in the stairwells are linked to an adjacent floor's system but the systems are not in synch from one floor to the next. Other synchronization issues are commonly found when different devices are used within the same circuit. It is imperative that the installation contractor check for synchronization issues not only throughout the work area but the adjacent areas as well.

Public and Common Areas Defined

As it pertains to applicability of the installation of visual notification devices under *the International Fire Code* ***Public and common areas,*** we require the installation of visual notification devices in the following areas in addition to any other specific code requirements:

- Common Hallways
- Meeting and/or Conference Rooms
- Kitchen and Break Rooms
- Restrooms designed with more than one toilet or urinal
- Waiting Rooms
- Locker Rooms
- Dining Areas
- Any other area designed for use by two or more persons

Exception: Visual notification devices are not interpreted as being automatically required in space designated as an individual's office which may otherwise be furnished with a small table, or several chairs intended for impromptu discussion or meeting by two or more persons.

Transmission of Multiple Alarms

As it pertains to applicability of the installation and operation of fire alarm systems, no fire alarm panel or arrangement of existing fire alarm panels shall cause or allow a single point of detection, when activated in any fire sprinkler or fire alarm system, to result in the transmission or dispatch of multiple fire alarms to multiple addresses or occupancies.

Multiple Alarms in a Single Building are Prohibited

A single fire alarm panel and corresponding single central station monitoring service shall be required for any building or structure served by a single fire sprinkler system, regardless of the number of subdivided occupancies including those with separate numerical addresses. For the purposes of this section, a fire sprinkler system shall be defined as any and all risers tapped from a given underground fire main or other water source. All occupancies served by the fire sprinkler system shall have all required detection and notification devices tied into the single fire alarm panel. This provision shall not apply to existing occupancies and structures until one of the following conditions apply:

1. A fire alarm control panel is replaced, no longer serviceable or otherwise non-compliant with applicable codes and standards
2. A building remodel, expansion or renovation requires a Building Permit from the District.
3. A change in occupancy constitutes a Change of Use

Where this provision is triggered for an occupancy within a structure that had multiple alarm panels, the affected occupancy may elect to host the single fire alarm control panel and have all other existing notification and detection devices outside of the occupancy's space tied in or may elect to have all

detection and notification devices in their occupancy space tied into a single alarm panel hosted in another occupancy or common area of the building.

Proper Color of FACP and Remote Annunciator

Fire alarm control panels and remote annunciator shall be red in color or feature a sign above them in 1" tall white lettering on red background that reads "FIRE ALARM" or "FACP". Other similar panels, such as burglar alarm panels, are strongly discouraged from being red in color. Where they are, a sign is required next to the misleading panel identifying the location of the fire alarm control panel or remote annunciator if it is not in plain view from the misleading panel.