
Impairment and Fire Watch Policy

Purpose

1. To provide a consistent framework for handling situations when it becomes necessary to place any of the campus fire protection systems out of service.
2. To ensure compliance with the NJ Uniform Fire Code with regards to placing systems out of service.
3. To enhance the response and communications among College departments when fire protection systems are malfunctioning or placed out of service.
4. Establish a FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS IMPAIRMENT PLAN as the only document that authorizes such actions when they are requested by College employees or outside contractors.

Scope

All employees or contractors working on or around campus fire protection systems shall be familiar with this policy.

Related Documents

- New Jersey Uniform Fire Code N.J.A.C. 5:70-3, 901
- <https://www.ramapo.edu/ehs/fire-safety/>

Contacts

College Fire Marshal (201).684.6252

Enforcement of Policy

The policy will be enforced by the College Fire Marshal and the Office of Public Safety. The Division of Fire Safety will enforce applicable provisions of the New Jersey State Fire Code.

Background

The New Jersey Division of Fire Safety is the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) over all New Jersey State Colleges and Universities.

Reasons for Impairment

A fire protection system impairment is required anytime activities conducted may result in an unintentional fire protection system activation or when fire protection systems are being modified, inspected or tested. Fire protection impairment coordination is required by the New Jersey Uniform Fire Code, National Fire Protection Association, and College Policy. The *College Fire Marshal* has been designated the **Impairment Coordinator**. Any new installations or modifications to existing fire protection systems must have an approved Construction Permit from the applicable local enforcing agency. A fire protection impairment will not be approved if a construction permit is not issued. Minor renovations or repair work may not require a permit.

Procedures

- All efforts shall be made to limit the times that any part of campus fire protection system is disabled.

- Any request for a **PRE-PLANNED IMPAIRMENT** requiring that all or part of a fire protection system be disabled shall be submitted to the College Fire Marshal in advance of the work being performed. Requests shall be made using the attached Fire Protection System Impairment Plan form.
- All **EMERGENCY IMPAIRMENTS** requiring that all or part of a fire protection system be disabled for unplanned reasons shall require **immediate** notification to the College Fire Marshal. Emergency Impairments of occupied buildings **may** require a fire watch. The Public Safety Tour Commander shall also ensure that the Residence Life On Call Administrator (OCA) is notified if an emergency impairment occurs in a residence hall.
- In case of a sprinkler or standpipe system impairment, the contractor working on the system shall tag each fire department connection (FDC), indicating the portion of the system that is out of service. Typically this will be accomplished by wrapping the FDC with caution tape.
- If the reason for a fire alarm system impairment is in connection with cutting, welding or any other type of hot work activity, the College Fire Marshal must be notified as to the location, nature and extent of the hot work. *A Hot Work Permit may be required.*
- Where required by the NJ Division of Fire Safety, a Fire Watch shall be established until such time that the fire protection systems are restored to service.
- The College's fire protection systems contractor or the College Fire Marshal are the only individuals authorized to place a fire suppression system out of service. The fire protection systems contractor is the only individual authorized to restore a fire suppression system. In emergency situations, RCNJ facilities staff may shut down and restore suppression systems, in consultation with the Fire Marshal.
- The College Fire Marshal or his designee shall notify the Division of Fire Safety and the Mahwah Fire Department each time a fire protection system is out of service.
- The College Fire Marshal or his designee shall notify the College's insurance company, FM Global, each time a fire protection system is out of service for a pre-planned impairment.
- The College Fire Marshal or his designee shall notify the Division of Fire Safety, the Mahwah Fire Department, and FM Global each time a fire protection system is restored to service.
- The Public Safety Tour Commander or his designee shall provide the College Fire Marshal with a report detailing the impairment event and the fire watch logs.

Fire Watch

Fire Watch is a temporary measure intended to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of a building or portion thereof by one or more qualified individuals for the purpose of identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of unwanted fire, raising an alarm of fire and notifying the fire department.

Inadequacy of any required fire protection system may constitute an imminent hazard, require a fire watch or evacuation. Implementation of a fire watch is at the discretion of the Fire Marshal, after consultation with a representative from the NJ Division of Fire Safety. The need for a fire watch will be evaluated based on the extent of impairment (sprinkler system or fire alarm, partial or complete, etc.), duration, time of day, occupancy, and other hazards.

Fire Watch Requirements

Fire Watch duties shall include constant patrols of all unprotected areas of the building to check for signs of fire or smoke conditions. The Fire Watch shall have means to alert the building occupants in case of a fire (air horn, whistle, etc.) as approved by the College Fire Marshal. The Fire Watch shall also have at least 1 approved means (e.g. a cell phone) to immediately notify the Fire Department (911) from a safe area. The Fire Watch shall stay in the building, except during emergencies and shall meet the fire department if they respond. Certain facilities will necessitate a fire watch be conducted from the exterior only (CPA's, Village, etc.). The person assigned to Fire Watch shall have no other duties to perform except Fire Watch.

The date and time of each inspection shall be recorded and be part of the written records maintained by Public Safety.

The "Fire Watch" shall consist of the following:

1. Periodic inspection of the areas and rooms within the affected building(s) to ensure hazards do not exist;
2. Ensuring adequate fire protection equipment such as properly maintained fire extinguishers, emergency exits, exit lights, emergency lights, etc. are available and in working condition;
3. Reporting hazardous work practices such as welding, cutting, brazing or the use of open flame that are not permitted during the impairment.
4. Notification to the Division of Fire Safety and the Mahwah Fire Department by the College Fire Marshal that a "Fire Watch" is in effect at a particular building or location on campus.
5. The recording and reporting of any emergencies and actual fires.
6. Should the Fire Watch encounter any smoke or fire within the patrol area, they shall **IMMEDIATELY** notify Public Safety via radio, by dialing **x6666** or **9-911**. If the buildings fire alarm is functional, they shall activate the nearest manual fire alarm pull station.
7. If possible and safe to do so, the Fire Watch shall attempt to alert as many of the building's occupants as possible of the need to evacuate.
8. All occupants shall be directed to use the closest exit to evacuate.
9. Fire Watch personnel shall not endanger themselves or others to make direct notification to occupants. If they cannot safely notify the building's occupants to evacuate, Fire Watch personnel shall, upon the arrival of the emergency response personnel, inform them as to the location(s) of any occupants not yet evacuated.
10. The Fire Watch duties **DO NOT** include extinguishing the fire, if such action places the Fire Watch personnel in any danger.

Fire Watch Qualifications:

The individuals performing the fire watch shall be trained in the following:

1. Use of portable fire extinguisher;
2. Procedures for reporting an emergency;
3. Evacuation procedures; and
4. Hazard recognition.

N.J. Uniform Fire Code Regulations

901.7 Systems out of service.

Where a required fire protection system is out of service, the fire department and the fire code official shall be notified immediately, and where the fire code official determines that an imminent hazard exists pursuant to N.J.A.C 5:70-2.16, the building shall be either evacuated in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:70-2.17 or an approved fire watch shall be provided for all occupants left unprotected by the shutdown until the fire protection system has been returned to service. Where utilized, fire watches shall be provided with not less than one approved means for notification of the fire department and their only duty shall be to perform constant patrols of the protected premises and keep watch for fires.

901.7.1 Impairment coordinator.

The building owner shall assign an impairment coordinator to comply with the requirements of this section. In the absence of a specific designee, the owner shall be considered the impairment coordinator.

901.7.2 Tag required.

A tag shall be used to indicate that a system, or portion thereof, has been removed from service.

901.7.3 Placement of tag.

The tag shall be posted at each fire department connection, system control valve, fire alarm control unit, fire alarm annunciator and fire command center, indicating which system, or part thereof, has been removed from service. The fire code official shall specify where the tag is to be placed.

901.7.4 Preplanned impairment programs.

Preplanned impairments shall be authorized by the impairment coordinator. Before authorization is given, a designated individual shall be responsible for verifying that all of the following procedures have been implemented:

- 1. The extent and expected duration of the impairment have been determined.*
- 2. The areas or buildings involved have been inspected and the increased risks determined.*
- 3. Recommendations have been submitted to management or the building owner/manager.*
- 4. The fire official and the fire department have been notified.*
- 5. The insurance carrier, the alarm company, the building owner/manager and other authorities having jurisdiction have been notified.*
- 6. The supervisors in the areas to be affected have been notified.*
- 7. A tag impairment system has been implemented.*
- 8. Necessary tools and materials have been assembled on the impairment site.*

901.7.5 Emergency impairments.

Where unplanned impairments occur, appropriate emergency action shall be taken to minimize potential injury and damage. The impairment coordinator shall implement the steps outlined in Section 901.7.4.

901.7.6 Restoring systems to service.

When impaired equipment is restored to normal working order, the impairment coordinator shall verify that all of the following procedures have been implemented:

- 1. Necessary inspections and tests have been conducted to verify that affected systems are operational.*
 - 2. Supervisors have been advised that protection is restored.*
 - 3. The fire department has been advised that protection is restored.*
 - 4. The building owner/manager, insurance carrier, alarm company and other involved parties have been advised that protection is restored.*
 - 5. The impairment tag has been removed.*
-



Fire Protection System Impairment Plan

COLLEGE IMPAIRMENT COORDINATOR: Evan Kutzin, Fire Marshal, 201-446-8717

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME: _____ PHONE NUMBER: _____

DATE: _____ EXPECTED DURATION: _____ *hours* FROM: _____ TO: _____

FIRE ALARM SYSTEM SPRINKLER SYSTEM OTHER FIRE SUPPRESSION

CAUSE FOR IMPAIRMENT: _____

EXTENT OF IMPAIRMENT: _____

AREAS OR BUILDINGS INVOLVED: _____

SPECIAL HAZARDS: _____

DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY NOTIFIED: YES NO DATE: _____ TIME: _____

FIRE DEPARTMENT NOTIFIED: YES NO DATE: _____ TIME: _____

INSURANCE CARRIER NOTIFIED: YES NO DATE: _____ TIME: _____

ALARM COMPANY NOTIFIED: YES NO DATE: _____ TIME: _____

FDC TAGGED: YES NO

FIRE WATCH: YES NO

NAME OF PERSON PERFORMING FIRE WATCH: _____

NAME OF PERSON PERFORMING FIRE WATCH: _____

NAME OF PERSON PERFORMING FIRE WATCH: _____

NAME OF PERSON PERFORMING FIRE WATCH: _____

When impaired equipment is restored to normal working condition, the impairment coordinator shall verify that all of the following procedures have been implemented:

1. *Necessary inspections and tests have been conducted to verify that affected systems are operational.*
2. *Supervisors have been advised that protection is restored.*
3. *The fire department has been advised that protection is restored.*
4. *The building manager, insurance carrier, alarm company and other involved parties have been advised that protection is restored.*
5. *The impairment tag has been removed.*

FORM COMPLETED BY: _____ SIGNATURE: _____