

Northwestern

Fire Watch

Environmental Health and Safety

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I. Purpose

This program establishes a process to identify the need for a fire watch to protect the Northwestern community and property during a fire alarm or sprinkler system impairment.

II. Scope

This program applies to the partial or complete impairment of a fire alarm or sprinkler system in university buildings. This program applies to occupied buildings and renovation projects and does not apply to new construction projects. Refer to the Northwestern [Welding, Cutting, and Brazing \(Hot Work\) Program](#) for fire watch requirements for hot work activities (e.g., welding, brazing, cutting, soldering, thawing pipes, using heat guns, torch-applied roofing and chipping operations, and using spark-producing power tools, such as drills or grinders).

III. Definitions

A. Fire Watch

The assignment of personnel to a building for the purpose of:

- i. Detecting fires and other hazardous conditions and emergencies,
- ii. Raising and/or activate an alarm,
- iii. Notifying University Police, and
- iv. Assisting in the evacuation of occupants in the event of a fire or other hazardous situation or emergency.

B. Assurance Check

- i. The assignment of personnel to a building for the purpose of:
 - a. Detecting fires and other hazardous conditions and emergencies,
 - b. Monitoring the status (e.g., occupancy), and
 - c. Notifying University Police.
- ii. Does not replace the need for a fire watch, but may be utilized in situations that do not require a formal fire watch, and may be used to supplement a fire watch in certain circumstances, as determined in **Section V. Requirements**.

IV. Responsibilities

A. Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

- iii. Review, audit, and revise this program as necessary.
- iv. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
- v. Conduct fire watch assessments in collaboration with the Facilities Impairment Coordinator and local fire department.
- vi. Coordinate impairments and fire watch activities with Facilities, University Police, contractors, Residential Services, Fraternity and Sorority Life, fire department, and other departments as necessary.
- vii. Provide guidance and technical assistance as needed.

B. Facilities

- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
- ii. Responsible for designating an Impairment Coordinator.
- iii. Notify the fire department (e.g., inspector/deputy fire marshal) and EHS of any fire alarm or sprinkler system impairments that are:
 - a. Not planned,
 - b. Over 6 hours in one day, if planned, or

- c. Over 20 hours in one week, if planned.
 - iv. Coordinate impairments and fire watch activities with EHS, University Police, contractors, Residential Services, Fraternity and Sorority Life, fire department, and other affected departments as necessary.
 - v. Responsible for all fire alarm and sprinkler system impairments and restorations.
 - vi. Ensures Red Tag permits are completed for any sprinkler impairment.
- C. Northwestern Departments**
- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
 - ii. Coordinate impairments, fire watch, and assurance check activities with EHS, Facilities, fire department, contractors, and the impairment coordinator.
 - iii. May provide personnel for fire watch and assurance check patrols.
- D. Facilities Impairment Coordinator**
- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
 - ii. Notifies EHS and fire department of fire alarm and sprinkler system impairments.
 - iii. Conduct fire watch assessments (see **Appendix 1**) in collaboration with EHS and fire department, if necessary.
 - iv. Notifies the fire department if a fire watch is deemed necessary.
 - v. Authority to approve all planned building fire protection and notification system impairments.
 - vi. Notifies all affected departments and building occupants of any fire alarm or sprinkler system impairments and fire watch requirements.
 - vii. Notifies fire department, EHS, affected departments, and building occupants that fire watch activities have ended, when systems are restored and functional.
- E. Fire Watch Shift Lead**
- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
 - ii. Designated by the primary department providing fire watch, for each shift.
 - iii. Coordinates staffing and guidelines in collaboration with Facilities and EHS.
 - iv. Must meet all the requirements of the Fire Watch Personnel.
 - v. Ensures effective communication with all Fire Watch personnel (e.g., radio, cell phone).
 - vi. Serves as the main emergency contact for the location during the fire watch and provides University Police with direct contact information (e.g., radio channel, cell phone).
 - vii. Reports hourly status updates and shift changes to University Police Dispatch.
 - viii. Ensures shift changes do not result in inadequate fire watch coverage.
 - ix. Has a working knowledge of the fire alarm and its components, including its state of operability and limitations, and the ability to communicate a fire alarm and effectively order an evacuation of the building.
 - x. Communicates the Fire Watch requirements and responsibilities to Fire Watch Personnel and distributes the [Fire Watch Guidelines and Log](#) prior to each shift.
 - xi. Ensures Fire Watch Personnel understand their responsibilities.
 - xii. Verifies Fire Watch Personnel have access to all patrol areas.
 - xiii. Collects completed fire watch patrol logs and adheres to the recordkeeping requirements (see **Section VII. Recordkeeping**)

F. Fire Watch Personnel

- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
- ii. May be assigned by Facilities, departments, or contractors as staffing and resources allows.
- iii. Be a minimum age of 18 years old.
- iv. Remain awake and alert at all times.
- v. Have access to telephone or radio equipment that is capable of contacting the Fire Watch Shift Lead and University Police in the event of a fire or other hazardous situation and be familiar with using the 911 system.
- vi. Be familiar with the premises, [general evacuation procedures](#), and evacuation assembly areas:
 - i. [Chicago Campus Buildings](#)
 - ii. [Evanston Campus Residential Buildings](#)
 - iii. [Evanston Campus Non-Residential Buildings](#)
- vii. Be able to alert occupants and assist in the evacuation of occupants in the event of a fire or other hazardous situation.
- viii. Complete portable fire extinguisher [training](#).
- ix. Have access to a portable fire extinguisher at all times.
- x. Encouraged to carry a flashlight and whistle to alert occupants to evacuate.
- xi. Cannot have any other responsibilities other than being a fire watch.
- xii. Maintain a fire watch [patrol log](#) of all patrols and shift activities and return the log to the Fire Watch Shift Lead at the end of each shift.
- xiii. Must inform Fire Watch Shift Lead immediately of any fires, emergencies, injuries, hazardous conditions, concerns, doubt, or lack of understanding of the fire watch responsibilities.
- xiv. Must not leave the fire watch duties until properly relieved.

G. Assurance Check Personnel

- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
- ii. May be assigned by Facilities, departments, or contractors as staffing and resources allows.
- iii. Be a minimum age of 18 years old.
- iv. Must adhere to assurance check duties, as assigned, until properly relieved.
- v. Have access to telephone equipment or radio that is capable of contacting University Police in the event of a fire and be familiar with using the 911 system.
- vi. Be familiar with the premises and the building.
- vii. Able to identify and report any fires, emergencies, injuries, hazardous conditions, concerns, or doubt to University Police.

H. Contractors

- i. Adhere to the requirements of this program.
- ii. May provide personnel for fire watch and assurance check patrols.
- iii. Not authorized to perform any system impairments or restorations.

V. Requirements

A. Impairments

- i. A fire watch is required in an occupied area of a building when Facilities Operations, the Impairment Coordinator, and/or EHS determine that:
 - a. The fire detection system is impaired and unable to effectively alert occupants to evacuate, as designed,
 - b. The fire alarm system panel is impaired and unable to effectively alert University Police, as designed,
 - c. The fire detection system and sprinkler/suppression systems are impaired and unable to effectively alert occupants to evacuate, as designed, or
 - d. EHS, Facilities Operations, and/or fire department determine a fire watch is necessary.
- ii. For planned fire alarm and/or sprinkler impairment, conduct an assessment to determine if a fire watch is required (see **Appendix 1**) and if so, conduct a staffing assessment.
- iii. Planned impairments must be reviewed and approved, prior to any work, by the Impairment Coordinator.
- iv. For an unplanned impairment, the following personnel and departments must conduct an assessment and to determine the fire watch and/or assurance check requirements.
 - a. Facilities Impairment Coordinator, or designee
 - b. Facilities Operations Director, or designee
 - c. Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)
 - d. Residential Services (Evanston Residence Halls)
 - e. Fraternity and Sorority Life (Evanston Greek Housing)
- v. The impairment coordinator must contact the fire department and University Police for all planned and unplanned impairments requiring a fire watch, as determined by the assessment.
 - a. **University Police** – (847) 491-3256 (Evanston), (312) 503-3456 (Chicago)
 - b. **City of Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau** – (312) 746-6900
 - c. **City of Evanston Fire Department** (on-call fire investigator) – (847) 866-5096

B. Fire Watch Assessment

- i. The decision for a fire watch will be made collectively and agreed upon by Facilities, EHS, and the local fire department, if necessary, using the Impairment Fire Watch Assessment and Notification workflow (see **Appendix 1**).
- ii. The local fire department has the authority to require additional fire watch personnel and measures.
- iii. If a fire watch is necessary as determined by the assessment:
 - a. A staffing assessment must be conducted by all involved departments to determine the number of personnel necessary to cover the fire watch requirements.
 - b. A Fire Watch Shift Lead must be identified for each fire watch shift.
 - c. Facilities, departments, and contractors may provide personnel for fire watch assignments, so long as they meet the requirements of **Section IV.E.-F.**

- d. Facilities, departments, and contractors providing fire watch personnel must provide individual contact information to the Fire Watch Shift Lead(s).
- iv. If fire watch staffing is not available during an impairment that requires a fire watch as determined by the assessment:
 - a. The affected area(s) must be evacuated and remain so until sufficient fire watch staffing can be provided, or until the systems are restored.
 - b. Occupants must be notified as necessary to ensure the areas are not occupied (e.g., notifying building managers, departments, Facilities).
 - c. Signage must be posted at all entrances to affected areas informing individuals that the building is not to be occupied.
 - d. When practical and feasible, entrances must be secured to ensure areas remain unoccupied.
 - e. Assurance checks must be utilized at periodic intervals, specific to the situation, to ensure areas remain unoccupied. University Police must be notified immediately of any area found to be occupied.
 - f. When adequate fire watch staffing is implemented, or when the fire alarm system is restored, occupants must be notified that the area may be re-occupied as necessary (e.g., notifying building managers, departments, Facilities).

C. Fire Watch

- i. Fire watch personnel must be posted on each affected floor of multiple story structures.
- ii. Fire watch personnel must conduct a complete walkthrough of the building or affected area at least once every 15 minutes.
- iii. Fire watch personnel must each complete the fire watch [patrol log](#) for each shift.
- iv. The fire watch patrol must verify:
 - a. Exits are available, accessible, and functional,
 - b. Fire doors are functional, unobstructed, and closed,
 - c. Fire extinguisher locations, availability, accessibility, and functionality, and
 - d. Other fire control and notification devices (e.g., fire curtain in theaters, kitchen hood systems) and knowledge on activation procedures.
- v. A fire watch cannot be discontinued without approval from the impairment coordinator and verification that systems are restored.
- vi. In places of assembly, such as theaters and concert halls, a fire watch must be posted in each separate room that is capable of being occupied by 49 or more people.
- vii. When communication between the building alarm system and University Police is lost (i.e., failure of digital monitoring panel DMP, which maintains communication of all alarm signals between the fire alarm panel and University Police) and the fire alarm and sprinkler system is otherwise in normal operation, a designated competent person familiar with the alarm system, is required to monitor the fire alarm control panel (FACP) and notify University Police (e.g., radio, telephone) immediately, of any alarm condition, until the communication system has been repaired/restored to normal operation.

- viii. For any buildings with positive alarm sequence programming (i.e., game day mode, which is a manually initiated delay in the operation of an automatic alarm or voice alarm system for up to 180 seconds to permit investigation of the alarm signal), the fire department and Facilities Operations personnel must be present during the times the alarm is in the positive alarm sequence programming state.

VI. Training

- A. The Fire Watch Shift Lead must review the roles, responsibilities, and expectations with the fire watch patrol personnel prior to each fire watch shift, utilizing the [Fire Watch Guidelines and Log](#).
- B. Fire Watch Shift Leads and Personnel must be [trained](#) in the use of fire extinguishers.

VII. Recordkeeping

- A. Completed fire watch patrol logs must be submitted to the Fire Watch Shift Lead at the end of each shift.
- B. When fire watch activities are completed and systems restored, submit all fire watch patrol logs to EHS at ehs@northwestern.edu.
- C. Fire watch patrol logs must be retained for at least one year.

VIII. Regulatory Authority and Related Information

Northwestern and contractors will comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) standards, National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) codes, International Fire Council's (IFC) codes, and any other applicable codes and standards, including:

[OSHA 29 CFR 1910.252 – Welding, Cutting, and Brazing](#)

[NFPA 101 – Life Safety Code – 3.3.104, 9.6.1.6, and Appendix A \(2012 version\)](#)

[NFPA 25 – Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems – 15.5.2 \(2011 version\)](#)

[IFC 901.7 – Fire Protection Systems \(2012 version\)](#)

Northwestern's Red Tag Process

IX. Contact

For questions contact Environmental Health and Safety at ehs@northwestern.edu or (847) 467-6342.

Appendix 1 – Impairment Fire Watch Assessment and Notification

