

Division of Fire Safety Fire Watch Requirements

September 2010

What is a fire watch?

A fire watch is a temporary measure for the purposes of ensuring the fire-safety of a building or premises in the event of any act or situation which creates an increased risk to persons or property.

The term fire watch is also used to describe a dedicated person or persons whose sole responsibility is to look for fires and other hazards within a building, specific area, or premises.

What is the purpose of a fire watch?

The purpose of a fire watch is provide temporary surveillance in a building or premises for the purposes of identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of unwanted fire, initiating alarms or evacuation procedures, and notifying the fire department.

When is a fire watch required?

A fire watch is required under the following circumstances, as outlined in the 2006 Edition of the International Fire Code (IFC):

- When the building's fire alarm system or sprinkler system will be out of service for four (4) or more hours in a 24-hour period (IFC 901.7).
- When "hot work" operations (i.e., welding) are being performed on premises (IFC 2604.2).
- During building demolition when the local fire code official determines that the operation is hazardous in nature (IFC 1404.5).
- When, in the opinion of the fire code official, it is essential for public safety in a place of assembly or congregation due to the number of persons, nature of performance, exhibition, display, contest, or activity (IFC 403.1).

How long can a fire watch remain in affect?

In general, a fire watch is to be used only as a temporary means to provide either an extra level of safety (in the case of a special event or hot work operation) or to supplant an out of service life safety system.

A fire watch cannot be used as a technique to avoid or delay the installation of a required fire sprinkler, fire alarm, or other life safety system.

Hot work requires that a fire watch last throughout the duration of the operation and at least 30 minutes after the conclusion of work. The 30 minute time period may be extended by the fire code official depending on the nature of work or hazards present.

Who can be assigned to fire watch?

Persons assigned to fire watch should be familiar with the building or premises and have access to all areas to sufficiently perform their patrol duties. Assigned persons should also be well-versed in any and all emergency evacuation procedures, safety plans, alarm activation procedures, and have formal training in the proper use of fire extinguishers or other emergency safety equipment.

Persons assigned to fire watch must have no other responsibilities but to perform the fire watch. In other words, an employee who is normally assigned to perform maintenance duties in a school cannot be assigned to a fire watch while cleaning floors; nor can a security guard at a public event perform door security and fire watch duties simultaneously—fire watch personnel shall have the sole responsibility of performing fire watch duties.

What are the duties of fire watch personnel?

Fire watch personnel shall keep a constant watch for fires, be on the lookout for any obstructions to exits, and be alert to any other hazards during the time when the building or premises is open to the public, the hazardous activity is taking place, or throughout the duration of the fire alarm/sprinkler system being out of service.

Fire watch personnel are expected to correct any hazards found, extinguish small fires, contact the fire department, activate fire alarms, and assist with emergency evacuation procedures of the public.

Fire watch personnel shall patrol their areas at a minimum of 30-minute intervals.

Are there any specific tools or equipment fire watch personnel need to perform their duties?

Fire watch personnel need to be provided with a minimum of one (1), approved and reliable means of notification to the local fire department or fire alarm monitoring company. The “approved” means shall be determined by the local fire code official. Examples include a hard-wired telephone, cellular phone (with no dead-coverage areas), manual central station fire alarm, or radio.

Fire watch personnel shall also be provided access to fire extinguishing equipment (i.e., portable extinguishers) and have received adequate training on its safe use.

During hot work operations, fire watch personnel shall be supplied a minimum of one portable fire extinguisher with a minimum 2A:20BC rating. This extinguisher shall be within 30 feet of the location where the hot work is performed. Fire watch and hot work personnel shall be trained on the proper use of fire extinguishers before performing these duties.

Finally, it is a requirement that all fire watch personnel record a log of their activity. The log shall have the following information:

1. Name and address of building /premises where fire watch is to be performed.
2. Reason for the fire watch (i.e. special event, hot work operation, or specific hazards).
3. Name(s) of fire watch personnel assigned.
4. Date of fire watch.
5. Time of fire watch.
6. Area(s) patrolled.
7. Condition or status of the area patrolled.

An example of a fire watch log is shown below.

Fire Watch Log

Name/Address of Building: _____

Reason for Fire Watch: _____

Person Performing Fire Watch: _____

Date: ___/___/___ Time: ___/___ am pm Area patrolled: _____ Status: _____

Date: ___/___/___ Time: ___/___ am pm Area patrolled: _____ Status: _____

Date: ___/___/___ Time: ___/___ am pm Area patrolled: _____ Status: _____

How do you request a fire watch?

If a fire watch is necessary it is required that you formally request it through the local fire code official or, in absence of a local fire official, the Division of Fire Safety. The fire code official or DFS shall determine if a fire watch is appropriate on a case by case basis using the following criteria as guidance:

- Hazards present.
- Occupancy type and/or occupancy load.
- Duration of fire watch requested.
- Training of fire watch personnel.
- Intent of repairing out of service life safety systems or equipment.

If the fire watch is granted, the owner or property manger must notify the following organizations or people:

1. Fire alarm monitoring company (if applicable).
2. Local fire department.
3. Building's property insurance carrier.
4. Colorado Department of Health and Environment (healthcare facilities only)—303-753-6214.

Who do I notify when I complete a fire watch?

When a fire watch is complete, it is the building owner's or property manager's responsibility to notify the same organizations or people they did to request the fire watch (see above).

At the end of the fire watch, the log shall be mailed, emailed, or faxed to the local fire code official or the Division of Fire Safety. The Division of Fire Safety's contact information is below:

Mailing Address: Division of Fire Safety
Attn: Steve Gasowski
690 Kipling Street
Denver, CO 80215

Email: steve.gasowski@cdps.state.co.us (subject line: Fire Watch Log for <name of building>)

Fax: 303-239-5887 (attn: Steve Gasowski)