

# Fire Watch

## CHAPTER 8.13

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Submitted by: Fire Marshal's Office

Approved by: Chief of Fire Rescue

### Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to define a uniform guide for providing a fire watch, when required, to protect life, property, and to enhance the safety and well-being of residents, businesses, customers, and partners by Alachua County Fire Rescue.

### RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all individuals involved at an incident scene to take appropriate action to ensure the level of protection to life and property are maintained or steps are in place to accommodate maintenance of an adequate level of protection. It is the responsibility of company officers and higher ranking officers to maintain the basic knowledge of the fire watch guidelines. The company officer shall notify the Fire Marshal as soon as possible or immediately after the implementation of a fire watch.

### DEFINITIONS

Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) – The organization, office, or individual responsible for approving equipment, materials, and installation, or a procedure. Persons authorized to enforce laws and rules of State Fire Marshal.—The chiefs of county, municipal, and special district fire departments; other fire department personnel designated by their respective chiefs... are authorized to enforce this law and all rules prescribed by the State Fire Marshal within their respective jurisdictions (F.S. 633).

Fire Protection System – Any fire alarm or fire sprinkler system.

Fire Watch – A fire watch is a temporary measure intended to insure continuous and systematic surveillance of an occupied building (10 or more people) or significant portion thereof for the purpose of identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of unwanted fire, raising alarm of fire, notifying emergency forces, and aiding in the evacuation of building occupants. A person or persons assigned to an area for the purpose of protecting the occupants from fire or similar emergencies. Duties of the fire watch might include notifying the fire department and building occupants of an emergency, preventing a fire from occurring, or extinguishing small fires.

### BACKGROUND

A fire protection system might be shut down for any number of reasons during the life of the building. Some shutdowns are preplanned, controlled, and of short duration, such as during periodic testing and maintenance. Others might be preplanned and of longer duration such as times of building or system renovation. Planned outages with appropriate service technician on site are acceptable up to ten (10) hours. Emergency shutdown can be the result of power failure, fire, system failure, or other physical damage and might result in short or lengthy shutdown to repair the system.

Instead of designating a building with an inoperative fire protection system as non-compliant and prohibiting occupancy under all conditions, allowance of an approved fire watch differentiates between unexpected fire protection system outages that last less than four hours in a 24-hour period and those that last longer. Continued occupancy of a building that has an unexpected fire protection system outage of more than four hours in a 24-hour period can only be tolerated if a fire watch acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction is provided. Such lengthy outages generally indicate a situation that involves a problem more serious in nature than typical fire protection system testing or maintenance.

It is the intent that a fire watch to result in heightened awareness of the buildings operation and environment. Individuals selected for the fire watch should be able to recognize fire hazards and know the procedures for occupant and fire department notification and occupant evacuation in the event of an emergency. The requirement for a fire watch is outlined in the current edition of the Florida Fire Prevention Code.

## **POLICY**

Where a fire protection system is or will be out of service for more than four (4) hours in a 24-hour period, the AHJ shall be notified, and the building shall be evacuated or an approved fire watch shall be provided until the fire protection system has been returned to normal service.

Although it is not possible to cover all of the potential uses for the for a fire watch, this guide provides specific guidelines for the most commonly encountered use of a fire watch, which fall into three main categories.

1. Fire watch for augmenting fire protection for temporary special uses.
2. Fire watch as a temporarily substitute for required a required fire protection system that is inoperable or not consistent with the level of protection required for any reason until such fire protection system has been approved for service.
3. Fire watch as a temporary substitute for non-compliance or maintenance services due to changes to the originally approved system.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Company Officer**

- A. Identify the need for a fire watch.
- B. Contact CCC and notify a fire watch is to be established at the location.
- C. Document that a fire watch was established on the incident report.
- D. Give fire watch form to facility representative.
- E. Review fire watch procedure with facility representative (**See below**).
- F. Email ACFR Fire Marshal to notify of the fire watch upon returning to station.

**Review the following with the facility representative**

The owner, property manager, or project manager has the sole responsibility for the fire watch. The responsible party in conjunction with the AHJ shall assign as many personnel as necessary to the fire watch and such person(s) shall provide:

1. Detailed instruction of the method, location, and frequency to be patrolled such as a facility map or floor plan.
2. Instruction in the procedure for reporting emergencies to the fire department.
3. Any other instruction required by the AHJ.
4. The owner, property manager, or project manager in charge or control of the premises shall provide a directory of names, telephone numbers, and other information to assist in making emergency calls and call to key personnel.
5. Records shall be maintained on the premises and be immediately available for inspection by Alachua County Fire Rescue.
6. Facility representative must inform the Fire Watch staff of the following:
  - Be able to communicate effectively.
  - Have a reliable method of communicating an emergency to the local public safety answering point (PSAP) via 9-1-1 or the 10-digit non-emergency number (352-955-1818).
  - Be thoroughly familiar with the area they are patrolling.
  - Fire watch shall be performed by personnel solely dedicated to the fire watch and no other facility related activities or events.
  - Patrol their designated area at least once each hour (24-hours a day or when the building is officially occupied).
  - Make reports as instructed including suspicious persons on the site.
  - A written record of patrol rounds and any significant information shall be maintained.
  - Relay any special orders or pertinent information to relief personnel.
  - Remain on duty and awake until properly relieved.
  - Alert building occupants of an emergency and direct evacuation when required.

**NOTE:** Random checks may be made by fire department personnel to ensure compliance with these requirements (day or night).

The fire watch shall not be terminated until the AHJ has verification that the fire protection system has been returned to normal operation and provides authorization to stop or discontinue.

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