Multi-Functional Alarms, Pull Stations & Positive Alarm Sequence

When schools replace, upgrade, or install fire alarms, they should consider having multi-functional alarms (e.g. separate fire and lock down alarms) to clearly and quickly inform building occupants how to take action. The emergency voice/alarm communication system may also be used for other emergency signaling, announcements, and for class changes.

Why?

- Multi-functional alarm systems enable streamlined communications for emergency and everyday purposes, to more quickly notify the school which planned response activity they should engage in. In emergency situations an early warning system is critical to saving lives.

- Fire alarms have played an important role in improving school safety. They effectively notify every person that an emergency is occurring and provide direction on what procedures should be followed. As one part of a coordinated approach, multi-functional alarms are the next logical step to protect and strengthen the safety of school occupants.

- Research suggests most schools don't have a similar alarm for use during an active shooter event that notifies the school to lock down rather than evacuate. Initiating an evacuation when the school should have been locked down, or vice versa, could put many lives in peril.

Manual Fire Alarm Boxes (aka Pull Stations)

In instances where schools are considering removing pull stations to mitigate malicious or false fire alarms, pull stations may be eliminated in certain circumstances. To be eligible, all interior corridors must be protected by smoke detectors and an automatic sprinkler system must be present in the school. There must also be approved heat-detection devices located in shop areas, science labs, and common areas such as auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasiums. In addition, a provision must be made at a central point to manually activate the evacuation signal or to evacuate only affected areas. For specific guidelines, see NFPA 72 and NFPA 101.

Important!

While The State Fire Code/ NFPA 1 provides provisions for fire alarm system modifications through NFPA 72 and NFPA 101, school districts must work with their local fire department and State Fire Marshal prior to implementing any changes.

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September 2022

Positive Alarm Sequence

Positive Alarm Sequence

This is an automatic visual or audible pre-signal that occurs in an area of the educational facility that is constantly monitored, which creates a short delay between the time it sounds and when the general alarm initiates throughout the building and alerts emergency personnel.

The purpose is to give facility staff a short window of time to check the validity of the alarm before a full alarm activates and a building evacuation starts. Full activation occurs if trained personnel do not reset the alarm within a specified period of time

(which can typically be programmed up to a 3 minute delay), or if another device detects fire conditions.

Benefits of Positive Alarm Sequence Verification:

- Enables personnel to check security cameras for suspicious activity that may indicate a false alarm or confirm the emergency's location

- Prevents disruption to learning in the event of false alarms

- Reduces the number of school wide false alarms

- Empowers school personnel with valuable information they can convey to police and fire departments prior to arrival, promoting a coordinated and informed response

Under NFPA 72, a Positive Alarm Sequence Verification shall be permitted.

Governance

RSA 153:1

VI-a. "New Hampshire fire code" or "state fire code" means the adoption by reference of the Life Safety Code, 2018 edition, and the Uniform Fire Code NFPA 1, 2018 edition, as published by the National Fire Protection Association and as amended by the state board of fire control and ratified by the general court pursuant to RSA

153:5. The provisions of any other national code, model code, or standard referred to within a code listed in this definition shall be included in the state fire code unless amended in accordance with RSA 153:5 and Saf-FMO 300.

September 2022