

A Guide for



Fire Watch Personnel

Introduction to Fire Watch

Fire watch is a temporary but critical safety measure implemented in various industries and contexts when automatic fire protection systems are either impaired or when particularly hazardous conditions exist that elevate the risk of fire.

FIRE WATCH – A temporary measure intended to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of a building or portion thereof by one or more qualified individuals for the purposes of identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of unwanted fire, raising an alarm of fire, and notifying emergency services.

Where a required fire sprinkler system, standpipe system, fire pump, Carbon Monoxide monitoring system, or fire/smoke detection and fire alarm system is out of service or has been found to have an impairment as defined in this Ordinance, the fire department and Fire Marshal shall be notified immediately of the existing conditions. The building owner shall designate an impairment coordinator to ensure compliance with all requirements of this section. The 24-hour contact information for the impairment coordinator shall be provided to the local fire department and the Fire Marshal.

A tag shall be affixed at the fire alarm control panel and the fire department connection to indicate that a system or part thereof is out of service.

The building shall either be evacuated, or, with the approval of the Fire Marshal, a fire watch shall be provided until the fire protection system has been returned to service.

When required by the Fire Marshal a fire watch shall be provided for a **building demolition and for building construction that is hazardous in nature**, such as but not limited to temporary heating or hot work. Fire Watch Manager shall comply with the requirements of the FCNYS Chapter 33, and Sections 14.10.5 and 14.10.9 of this Ordinance.

When required by the Fire Marshal, a fire watch shall be provided for **Hot Work** being conducted in areas with vertical or horizontal fire exposure that would require more than one person to monitor. The Fire Watch Manager shall comply with the requirements of FCNYS Chapter 35, and Sections 14.10.5 and 14.10.9 of this Ordinance.

As it applies to soundstages, approved productions, remote locations and live audience productions, the following shall apply. When required by the Fire Marshal, a fire watch shall be provided for any location or facility. The Fire Watch Manager shall comply with the requirements of FCNYS § 403.12 and Article 25, § 14.10.5 & 14.10.6 of this Ordinance.

Roles and Responsibilities of Fire Watch Personnel

1. Fire watch shall be performed by the fire watch manager; this manger shall be assigned no other duties than fire watch.
2. Management shall establish a chain of command among staff assigned to fire watch duties, additionally there shall be a clear line of succession in the event of absences.

3. Management shall ensure that fire watch managers are familiar with the procedures to follow in the recognition and reporting of an emergency, including:

- When and how to use radio equipment, telephone and private or public boxes to summon aid.
- How to notify the local fire department and other emergency response organizations.
- The management personnel are to be contacted if any emergency occurs.

4. Fire watch managers shall maintain a logbook. This log shall clearly show all activities of the fire watch including locations patrolled and conditions found. This log shall be available for review at all times.

5. Management shall ensure that all areas of the premise, interior and exterior, will be patrolled by patrol routes. The route(s) shall be explicitly defined to ensure that the fire watch Manager patrols the correct area.

6. Patrols shall be performed as often as necessary; however, all areas of the facility shall be patrolled at a minimum of once per hour.

7. Management shall establish training for the fire watch manager to ensure they are familiar with the property being protected, including:

- All buildings, occupancies and hazards.
- Fixed fire protection systems.
- Manual and automatic detection and alarm systems
- Portable fire protection equipment
- Emergency shutdown procedures and equipment for which they are responsible.
- The facility emergency plan.

8. The fire watch manager(s) shall be provided with a portable fire extinguisher as part of his/her normal equipment.

9. Fire watch officers shall be provided with a means for continuous communication with a constantly attended location. Management shall ensure that said communications equipment will function in all areas of the facility.

Identifying Common Fire Hazards

Various work environments present distinct sets of common fire hazards that fire watch personnel must be able to recognize and address:

In construction environments, several factors contribute to an elevated risk of fire. Hot work operations, such as welding, soldering, and grinding, are significant hazards as they introduce direct ignition sources into the worksite.

Temporary heating devices, often used in colder months, can also become a source of ignition if they are not safety tested by an independent third party, are not used in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, or are placed too close to combustible materials.

Unfortunately, unsecured construction sites can be vulnerable to arson, which poses a significant fire risk.

Smoking by workers on the site also presents a serious fire risk if not strictly controlled through designated smoking areas and proper disposal of smoking materials.

Until permanent fire protection systems like sprinklers and alarms are fully activated, the lack of adequate fire protection on construction sites makes them particularly vulnerable to rapid fire spread. The

accumulation of debris, sawdust, and improperly stored waste materials throughout the site can act as fuel for a fire, allowing it to grow and spread quickly. The presence of flammable building materials such as wood, insulation, and PVC also contributes to the fire load on a construction site. Improper disposal of rubbish, particularly through burning on-site, is a hazardous practice that should be strictly forbidden.

Methods of Fire Detection

Visual inspection plays a fundamental role in fire prevention and early detection. It is a key element of any comprehensive fire safety program, allowing fire watch personnel to proactively identify conditions that could lead to a fire or impede emergency response.

Using Portable Fire Extinguishers

To effectively respond to incipient-stage fires, fire watch personnel must be knowledgeable about the different classes of fires and the corresponding types of portable fire extinguishers that are appropriate for each class.

Fires are classified based on the type of fuel that is burning.

Class A fires involve ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth, rubber, and many plastics.

Class B fires involve flammable liquids, combustible liquids, flammable gases, oils, greases, tars, oil-based paints, solvents, lacquers, and alcohols.

Class C fires involve energized electrical equipment, such as computers, servers, motors, transformers, and appliances.

Class D fires involve combustible metals, such as magnesium, titanium, zirconium, sodium, lithium, and potassium.

Finally, **Class K fires** are those that involve combustible cooking media, such as vegetable or animal oils and fats, typically found in commercial cooking operations.

When using a portable fire extinguisher, it is crucial to remember the acronym **PASS**, which provides a simple four-step method for proper operation.

P stands for Pull the pin. This safety pin is located at the top of the extinguisher and prevents accidental discharge. To use the extinguisher, the pin must be pulled out, which will also break any tamper seal that may be in place. Immediately after pulling the pin, it is a good practice to test the extinguisher by briefly squeezing the handle, aiming the nozzle away from yourself, to ensure that it is working and to get a feel for the discharge.

A stands for Aim the nozzle. The nozzle should be aimed low, pointing it directly at the base of the fire. It is important to aim at the base of the flames where the fuel is burning, rather than at the flames themselves. When approaching the fire, maintain a safe distance, typically about 6 to 8 feet away.

S stands for Squeeze the handle. Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent. The handle should be squeezed slowly and evenly to ensure a steady and controlled discharge. If you are using a CO₂ extinguisher, be careful not to touch the plastic discharge horn as it can get extremely cold and cause frostbite.

The final S stands for Sweep. Sweep the nozzle from side to side at the base of the fire until it appears to be completely out. Continue sweeping the extinguishing agent across the entire burning material. After the fire appears to be extinguished, it is crucial to watch the area carefully for any signs of re-ignition and to repeat the **PASS** steps if necessary.

When approaching a fire to use an extinguisher, always ensure that you have a clear escape route behind you in case the fire grows larger or the extinguisher malfunctions. Remember that portable fire extinguishers are intended for use on small, incipient-stage fires in their early stages. You should only attempt to extinguish a fire if it is safe to do so and if you have been properly trained in the use of a fire extinguisher. If you are ever unsure about your ability to safely and effectively extinguish a fire, your priority should be to evacuate the area immediately and call 911 or the local emergency number.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures for Fire Incidents

A critical component of fire watch duties is a thorough understanding of emergency evacuation procedures in the event of a fire incident. Evacuation plans are detailed diagrams and written procedures that outline the safest and most efficient routes for occupants to evacuate a building during a fire or other emergencies.

Fire watch personnel, along with other designated individuals, should take a head count to verify that all occupants from their respective areas are accounted for. Any individuals who are unaccounted for should be immediately reported to the emergency personnel who are managing the incident. Under no circumstances should anyone, including fire watch personnel, re-enter the building until an official "all clear" message has been given by the fire department or authorized facility authorities.

The locations of designated assembly points are typically included in the fire evacuation plan for the building and are often marked on the emergency evacuation signs that are posted throughout the facility.

Communication Protocols for Fire Watch Personnel

Effective communication is a cornerstone of the fire watch role, ensuring that information about potential hazards and actual incidents is relayed promptly and accurately.

Internal communication among fire watch personnel, workers in the area, and supervisors is crucial for maintaining a safe environment. Before any hot work begins, it is essential for fire watch personnel to establish clear lines of communication with the individuals who will be performing the work. Throughout their watch, they should maintain constant and clear communication with these workers and with any other fire watch personnel who may be assigned to the same area or task. Any potential risks or incidents that are observed must be communicated to supervisory personnel without any delay so that appropriate action can be taken. Similarly, any fire safety concerns, no matter how minor they may seem, should be reported immediately to the designated authority, such as the facility's Fire Safety Office. If an unsafe condition arises during hot work, the fire watch personnel should immediately contact a supervisor.

In addition to internal communication, fire watch personnel must also be prepared to engage in **external communication** with emergency services when necessary. In the event of a fire, the priority is to notify the fire department immediately by calling 911 or a local number provided for the local fire department and providing them with accurate and detailed information about the situation.

Fire watch personnel should also be aware of who else they may need to contact in case of an emergency. Fire watch personnel must have access to at least one approved means of direct communication with the fire department, which could be a telephone, a cell phone, or a two-way radio.

If they determine that a fire is beyond their capability to extinguish using the available equipment, they must immediately alert other employees in the area and contact the appropriate emergency response personnel for assistance.

If the fire watch involves more than one person, it is essential that they have a way to communicate directly with each other, which can be achieved through cell phones or portable radios. Being able to use communication devices like walkie-talkies can be particularly helpful for coordinating activities over larger areas.

Relevant Laws

Nassau County Fire Prevention Ordinance

Section 14.10 Fire Watch

14.10.1 Impaired System:

Where a required fire sprinkler system, standpipe system, fire pump, Carbon Monoxide monitoring system, or fire/smoke detection and fire alarm system is out of service or has been found to have an impairment as defined in this Ordinance, the fire department and Fire Marshal shall be notified immediately of the existing conditions.

The building owner shall designate an impairment coordinator to ensure compliance with all requirements of this section. The 24-hour contact information for the impairment coordinator shall be provided to the local fire department and the Fire Marshal.

A tag shall be affixed at the fire alarm control panel and the fire department connection to indicate that a system or part thereof, is out of service.

The building shall either be evacuated, or, with the approval of the Fire Marshal, a fire watch shall be provided until the fire protection system has been returned to service.

14.10.2 Construction

When required by the Fire Marshal a fire watch shall be provided for a building demolition and for a building construction that is hazardous in nature, such as but not limited to temporary heating or hot work. Fire Watch Manager shall comply with the requirements of the FCNYS Chapter 33, and Sections 14.10.5 and 14.10.9 of this Ordinance.

14.10.3 Hot Work

When required by the Fire Marshal, a fire watch shall be provided for Hot Work being conducted in areas with vertical or horizontal fire exposure that would require more than one person to monitor. Fire Watch Manager shall comply with the requirements of the FCNYS Chapter 35, and Sections 14.10.5 and 14.10.9 of this Ordinance.

14.10.4 Soundstages, Approved Production, Remote Location and Live Audience

When required by the Fire Marshal, a fire watch shall be provided for any location or facility. Fire Watch Manager shall comply with the requirements of FCNYS § 403.12 and, Article 25, § 14.10.5 & 14.10.6 of this Ordinance.

14.10.5 Fire watch requirements:

1. Fire watch shall be performed by the fire watch manager; these managers shall be assigned no other duties than fire watch.
2. Management shall establish a chain of command among staff assigned to fire watch duties, additionally there shall be a clear line of succession in the event of absences.
3. Management shall ensure that fire watch managers are familiar with the procedures to follow in the recognition and reporting of an emergency, including:
 - When and how to use radio equipment, telephone and private or public boxes to summon aid.
 - How to notify the local fire department and other emergency response organizations.
 - The management personnel to be contacted if any emergency occurs.
4. Fire watch managers shall maintain a logbook. This log shall clearly show all activities of the fire watch including locations patrolled and conditions found. This log shall be available for review at all times.
5. Management shall ensure that all areas of the premise, interior and exterior, will be patrolled by patrol routes. The route(s) shall be explicitly defined to ensure that the fire watch Manager patrols the correct area.
6. Patrols shall be performed as often as necessary, however all areas of the facility shall be patrolled at a minimum of once per hour.
7. Management shall establish training for the fire watch manager to ensure they are familiar with the property being protected, including:
 - All buildings, occupancies and hazards.
 - Fixed fire protection systems.
 - Manual and automatic detection and alarm systems
 - Portable fire protection equipment
 - Emergency shutdown procedures and equipment for which they are responsible.
 - The facility emergency action plan.
8. The fire watch manager(s) shall be provided with a portable fire extinguisher as part of his/her normal equipment.
9. Fire watch officers shall be provided with a means for continuous communication with a constantly attended location. Management shall ensure that said communications equipment will function in all areas of the facility.

14.10.6 Certificate of Fitness Required

When required by this Ordinance anyone performing a Fire Watch shall be required to obtain a Certificate of Fitness for Fire Watch Manager. The requirement for a Certificate of Fitness shall be in accordance with Article XX of this Ordinance. The fee for the Certificate of Fitness is set forth in Article XXII of this Ordinance.

NYS Fire Code

3304.5.3 Fire watch location and records. The fire watch shall include areas specified by the prefire plan established in accordance with Section 3308.3. The fire watch personnel shall keep a record of all time periods of duty, including a log entry each time the site was patrolled and each time a structure under

construction was entered and inspected. The records and log entries shall be made available for review by the *fire code official* upon request.

3304.6 Cutting and welding. Welding, cutting, open torches and other hot work operations and equipment shall comply with Chapter 35.

3504.2 Fire watch. Fire watches shall be established and conducted in accordance with Sections 3504.2.1 through 3504.2.6.

3504.2.1 When required. A fire watch shall be provided during *hot work* activities and shall continue for not less than 30 minutes after the conclusion of the work. The *fire code official*, or the responsible manager under a *hot work program*, is authorized to extend the fire watch based on the hazards or work being performed.

Exception: Where the *hot work area* has no fire hazards or combustible exposures.

3504.2.2 Location. The fire watch shall include the entire *hot work area*. *Hot work* conducted in areas with vertical or horizontal fire exposures that are not observable by a single individual shall have additional personnel assigned to fire watches to ensure that exposed areas are monitored.

3504.2.3 Duties. Individuals designated to fire watch duty shall have fire-extinguishing equipment readily available and shall be trained in the use of such equipment. Individuals assigned to fire watch duty shall be responsible for extinguishing spot fires and communicating an alarm.

3504.2.4 Fire training. The individuals responsible for performing the *hot work* and individuals responsible for providing the fire watch shall be trained in the use of portable fire extinguishers.

3504.2.5 Fire hoses. Where hoselines are required, they shall be connected, charged and ready for operation.

3504.2.6 Fire extinguisher. Not less than one portable fire extinguisher complying with Section 906 and with a minimum 2-A:20-B:C rating shall be provided with *ready access* within 30 feet (9144 mm) of the location where *hot work* is performed.

Conclusion

Fire watch personnel serve as a vital temporary safety measure, providing continuous surveillance and immediate response capabilities when standard fire protection systems are impaired or during high-risk activities. Their responsibilities encompass a wide range of tasks, from meticulous pre-assignment checks and ongoing hazard identification to swift emergency response and detailed record-keeping. A thorough understanding of potential fire hazards across various environments, including construction sites, industrial facilities, and buildings undergoing maintenance, is important. This knowledge, coupled with proficiency in recognizing ignition sources and flammable materials, forms the foundation of proactive fire prevention. Fire watch personnel must also be adept at using various methods of fire detection, including visual inspection, and understanding the capabilities and limitations of smoke and heat detectors. In the event of a fire, they must be prepared to utilize portable fire extinguishers effectively, following the PASS method, and to implement emergency evacuation procedures, ensuring the safe and orderly egress of all building occupants to designated assembly points. Finally, clear and consistent communication, both internally with supervisors and colleagues and externally with emergency services, is essential for a coordinated and effective response to any fire-related incident. By mastering these key areas, fire watch personnel play a

crucial role in safeguarding lives and property, maintaining operational continuity, and ensuring compliance with relevant safety regulations.

In Nassau County you can apply for a certificate of fitness online at <https://app.nassaucountyny.gov/firemarshal/fitness-training/>

Fire watch check list

A fire watch checklist is an essential tool for ensuring thorough and consistent monitoring of potential fire hazards. Here's a general outline of what a comprehensive fire watch checklist should include:

I. General Information:

- Date:
- Time (Start & End):
- Location/Area of Fire Watch:
- Name of Fire Watch Personnel:
- Purpose of Fire Watch (e.g., Hot Work, Impaired Fire System):
- Contact Information (Emergency Numbers):

II. Pre-Watch Inspection:

- **Hazard Assessment:**
 - Are potential ignition sources identified?
 - Are flammable/combustible materials properly stored?
 - Are exits and pathways clear of obstructions?
- **Fire Safety Equipment:**
 - Are fire extinguishers readily available and charged?
 - Are fire alarms and sprinkler systems functioning (if applicable)?
 - Are emergency communication devices available?

III. During Fire Watch:

- **Continuous Monitoring:**
 - Are regular patrols conducted (specify frequency)?
 - Are all areas within the designated zone monitored?
 - Are there any signs of smoke, flames, or unusual odors?
- **Hot Work Monitoring (if applicable):**
 - Are hot work permits in place?
 - Is the area around hot work clear of combustibles?
 - Are spark/heat containment measures in place?
- **Documentation:**
 - Record the time of each patrol.
 - Note any observed hazards or incidents.
 - Document any corrective actions taken.

IV. Post-Watch Inspection:

- **Area Inspection:**
 - Is the area free of smoldering materials or residual heat?
 - Are all potential ignition sources extinguished?
 - Are all fire safety systems in a ready state.
- **Log Completion:**
 - Ensure all log entries are complete and accurate.
 - Sign and date the completed checklist.