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www.cor.net/fire

Fire Alarm Notification - Policy

[revised 11/08/2023- Significant Revisions are in Red.]

This policy is subject to revision - download the latest version at: www.cor.net/fire/permits.

To address the needs of our customers, while maintaining the level of safety intended by the applicable Codes and Standards, the Richardson Fire Marshal's Office has updated its Policy on fire alarm system notification as follows:

BACKGROUND:

IFC Chapter 2 Definitions:

COMMON USE. Interior or exterior circulation paths, rooms, spaces or elements that are not for public use and are made available for the shared use of two or more people.

[IFC Commentary]: ...Any space that is shared by two or more persons, such as copy areas, break rooms, toilet rooms or circulation paths, are common use areas....

EMPLOYEE WORK AREA. All or any portion of a space used only by employees and only for work. Corridors, toilet rooms, kitchenettes and break rooms are not employee work areas.

[IFC Commentary]: ...An employee work area will most likely expand past the station or desk where an employee performs his or her job. An employee work area could include common use spaces, but not public use spaces. **Depending on the duties of the employee**, it may also include copy areas, stockrooms, filing areas, an assembly line, etc....

Note that not all employee-only areas are considered part of employee work areas (e.g., bathrooms, corridors, breakrooms).

PUBLIC-USE AREAS. Interior or exterior rooms or spaces that are made available to the general public.

[IFC Commentary]: This term is utilized to describe all interior and exterior spaces or rooms that may be occupied by the general public for any amount of time. Spaces that are utilized by the general public may be located in facilities that are publicly or privately owned. Examples include the lobby in an office building, a high school gymnasium with assembly seating, an open-air stadium, a multipurpose room, an exposition hall, a restaurant dining room, a health club, etc....

IFC Sec. 907.5.2.1.1 Average sound pressure. The audible alarm notification appliances shall provide a sound pressure level of 15 decibels (dBA) above the average ambient sound level or 5 dBA above the maximum sound level having a duration of not less than 60 seconds, whichever is greater, in every occupiable space within the building.

IFC Sec. 907.5.2.3.1 Public use areas and common use areas. Visible alarm notification appliances shall be provided in public use areas and common use areas.

Exception: Where employee work areas have audible alarm coverage, the notification appliance circuits serving the employee work areas shall be initially designed with not less than 20-percent spare capacity to account for the potential of adding visible notification appliances in the future to accommodate hearing-impaired employee(s).

NFPA 72 Sec. 3.3.194* Occupiable. A room or enclosed space designed for human occupancy.

A.3.3.194 Occupiable. The term occupiable is used in this Code and in other governing laws, codes, or standards to determine areas that require certain features of a system. It is important for designers to understand that unless otherwise required, spaces that are not occupiable might not require or need coverage by initiating devices or occupant notification appliances. For example, most closets would not be considered to be occupiable. However, a space of the same size used as a file room would be considered occupiable.

NFPA 72 Sec. 3.3.195 **Occupiable Area.** *An area of a facility occupied by people on a regular basis.*

NFPA 72 Sec. 18.5.5.6* **Obstructions.** [This is new text, beginning in the 2022 edition, substantially affecting spacing of visible notification appliances.].

[NFPA 72 Enhanced Content]: ... ***The 2022 edition of the Code has added additional considerations for the fire alarm designer. The Code now requires that consideration be given to the effect obstructions may have on the direct and indirect visibility of the notification appliances. The designer, when designing a system for a new building, will likely have to consult with the project architect to determine how elements of the building, or its furnishings, might affect the visibility of the visual notification appliances. For an existing building, a site visit would provide the designer with the information necessary to avoid locating appliances where their direct or indirect light will be obstructed. Note that only direct viewing of the light from an appliance is permitted for corridor spacing rules to apply. Additional consideration should be given to ensure that an actual appliance is visible from all portions of the corridor when an occupant is walking in either direction in the corridor.***

NFPA 72 Sec. 18.5.5.6.1 **Ceiling mount visual notification appliances shall be mounted such that the effect of the appliance is not blocked by obstructions.**

NFPA 72 Sec. 18.5.5.6.2 **The effect of obstructions on distribution of light from wall-mounted appliances shall be considered when determining the location of appliances.**

POLICY:

General Exemptions:

Although the terms, “designed for human occupancy” and, “on a regular basis” are not clearly defined, the Richardson Fire Marshal has determined that the following spaces are generally exempt from audible and visible notification. [NOTE: Accessibility needs of specific users and employees may override these general exemptions]:

- Private garages in apartment complexes when used for parking of vehicles and storage of personal items;
- Closets and storage rooms [Storage rooms containing workspaces, file rooms, data halls, and warehouses are not exempt];
- Walk-in coolers and freezers in restaurants. [Public-use walk-in coolers and freezers in Group M and Group S occupancies are not generally exempt.];
- Mechanical Rooms smaller than 1,000 square feet in area, containing only mechanical equipment [Mechanical Rooms containing workspaces are not exempt.];
- Electrical Rooms [Electrical Rooms containing workspaces are not exempt.].

Elevator Cars, Exit Stair Enclosures and Exit Passageways:

NFPA 72 23.8.6.2 permits omission of visible and audible notification appliances in elevator cars and in “exit stair enclosures and exit passageways.” [Does not apply to IFC 907.5.2.2 Emergency voice/alarm communication systems.]

Outdoor Spaces:

Where egress from occupiable outdoor spaces requires re-entry into a protected building, notification is required as if the space is indoors;

WHERE APPLICABLE:

This Policy applies to all active Construction Permits and pending Applications. Where changed from the approved plans due to this Policy, please be sure that “As-Built” record drawings are correct.

This Policy is subject to revision. Please contact the Fire Marshal’s Office with specific questions.