

Portland State University

Fire Prevention
PO Box 751
Portland, OR 97207

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| Fire Watch Procedure | | |
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1. Purpose

A fire watch is required when fire detection or suppression systems are impaired from their normal function. According to NFPA 101.3.3.108, a fire watch is defined as the assignment of a person or persons to an area for the express purpose of notifying the fire department, the building occupants, or both, of an emergency; preventing a fire from occurring; extinguishing small fires; protecting the public from fire or life safety dangers.

These procedures are intended to provide guidance to keep Portland State University in compliance with all applicable regulatory standards.

2. Scope

These procedures are designed to prevent injury and loss of property from fire when fire and life safety systems are not fully operational by providing a trained person(s) to perform a fire watch within a space. This procedure is limited to PSU owned spaces.

3. Definitions

Fire System Impairment - when a fire protection or detection system, fire alarm system or other system designed to maintain the fire resistance of the building is taken out of service, either wholly or in part, planned or unplanned.

Fire Watch - a person or persons assigned to an area for the express purpose of notifying the fire department, the building occupants, or both of an emergency; preventing a fire from occurring; extinguishing small fires; or protecting the public from fire or life safety dangers.

Hot Work - hot work is the leading cause of fires during construction and maintenance activities. Hot work includes welding, brazing, grinding, open flame use, or any action that could produce sparks or flame.

Hot Work Permit - a document issued for the purpose of authorizing a specified activity in a non-designated hot work area

4. Responsibilities

The Fire Watch Procedure roles and responsibilities are described in the following sections. Each department or position listed below plays an important role in the overall safety at PSU. The success of these procedures is dependent on PSU employees adhering to them.

4.1. Fire Prevention Coordinator

The Fire Prevention Coordinator is responsible for the development, implementation, and review of the Fire Watch Procedure at PSU. It is their responsibility to ensure that a fire watch is present and trained when necessary.

4.2. Environmental Health & Safety (EHS)

EHS is responsible for ensuring compliance with OSHA / OR-OSHA standards at PSU. As this procedure is partially governed by OSHA, EHS assists the Fire Prevention Coordinator with enforcement and assignment of fire watch needs.

4.3. Fire Watch

The person assigned to perform a fire watch shall:

- Be responsible for ensuring safe conditions are maintained during fire system impairments and / or hot work operations and have the authority to stop hot work operations if unsafe conditions develop.
- Make patrols of affected areas every 30 minutes unless otherwise specified by the FPC or their designee.
- Record the following information in the Fire Watch Documentation Log:
 - Name of the responsible person(s) making the rounds
 - Date and time of fire watch rounds, include the end time
 - Significant findings during the watch period
- Have a working flashlight and access to a working phone during the watch period
- Be responsible for having fire extinguishing equipment readily available at the work site and trained in its use.
- Be familiar with the facility in which the hot work is being performed and the procedures for sounding an alarm in the event of a fire.
- Be permitted to perform additional tasks while conducting fire watch responsibilities, but those tasks shall not distract from their fire watch responsibilities.

Fire watch patrols exceeding 8 hours in duration shall be provided by a separate person for each 8-hour period (e.g. fire system impairment is scheduled for 16 hours, two 8-hour shifts are scheduled).

Personnel shall not be assigned to more than five floors to patrol during a fire watch period (e.g. fire system impairment affecting six floors will require two people to patrol each half of the building).

5. Program Requirements

5.1. Fire Watch Determination

When is a fire watch required:

- When Hot Work is being performed.* Details for this type of fire watch can be found in the Hot Work Program.
 - *In certain situations hot work may be performed without the assignment of a fire watch. This work must be performed in a designated hot work area, in areas where the full fire detection and suppression systems are operational, or at the discretion of the Fire Prevention Coordinator (or their designee).
- In the event of a temporary failure of the alarm system or where activities require the interruption of any fire detection, suppression, or alarm system component which would conflict with the intent of NFPA 72.
 - Is the building a residential type occupancy?
 - Will the impairment last more than 4 hours?
 - Is the building occupied?
 - Are there above normal hazards such as the storage of combustibles or flammables?
 - Has egress been reduced or eliminated?
- When a need is determined, by the Fire Prevention Team (or designee), PSU Insurance Provider, or Portland Fire and Rescue, to be essential for public safety in any place where people congregate (due to the number of persons, nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest, or activity).

6. Training

PSU Employees serving as a Fire Watch must have read these procedures and confirm that they understand their role and can perform the fire watch functions. Contractors must have training in Hot Work safety and confirm that they are able to perform the function required of a fire watch.

7. Recordkeeping

Records of fire watch patrols will be kept by the Fire Prevention Coordinator for six (6) months after the completion of the patrol.

8. Program Management

The PSU Fire Watch Procedure is maintained by the Fire Prevention Coordinator in the department of Emergency Management. It is reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.

9. Regulatory Standards

These procedures are intended to provide guidance to keep Portland State University in compliance with:

9.1. Portland Fire and Rescue Administrative Rule FIR1.04

This administrative rule provides guidance for when Portland Fire and Rescue would determine a need for a fire watch. Portland Fire and Rescue serves as the Authority Having Jurisdiction for PSU activities and thus dictates how we determine the need for a fire watch.

9.2. OSHA 29 CFR 1915.504

OSHA offers standards for the protection of employees / workers on a job site. This standard provides information for the employer regarding the type of documentation that needs to be kept, content of training required for employees serving as a fire watch, as well as information specific to how a fire watch operator should perform their duties.

