

<b>UT Health Science Center: FS5301 – Building Fire Watch Policy</b>	
<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Publication Date: 12/06/2024</b>

## Objective

To define the requirements and procedures for establishing a fire watch when the mechanical fire alarm system has been impaired or is out of services. It also establishes the procedure for requesting that building mechanical fire alarm systems or components be taken out of service.

This policy will be followed when a fire detection or suppression system becomes impaired for >4 hours in a 24-hour period, when hot work is being conducted in a building, or it is essential for public safety in any place where people congregate, due to the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity, one or more qualified persons are to be employed to be on fire watch duty at such place.

## Scope

This procedure is applicable to University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) buildings on the Memphis campus.

## Roles

1. **Fire Watch Officers acting on behalf of UTHSC or contractors shall be:**
  - a) Present in the location of the fire watch and for the duration of time when the fire watch has been established.
  - b) Familiar with the building and have access to all areas of concern
  - c) Trained to identify fire hazards.
  - d) Knowledgeable as to how to initiate occupant notification, evacuation and fire department notification.
  - e) Looking for fire during patrol and making sure that other fire protection features of the building (such as egress routes and alarm systems) are available and functioning properly.
  - f) Trained in the use of fire extinguishers and have them readily available. vi. Maintain a log of fire watch activities.
  
2. **Supervisors responsible for the area over which a fire watch has been established shall:**
  - a) Ensure that protection is provided from the hazards of fire for persons and property.
  - b) Notify the UTHSC Fire Safety Officer (FSO) when an impairment in the fire protection system lasts >4 hours, or when the fire protection system has been returned to service.
  - c) Contact the UTHSC FSO when the fire protection system is damaged or found to require repair.
  - d) Comply with the UTHSC Hot Work Permit procedure, if applicable.

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- e) Assure that staff, equipment, training and procedures are adequate and in place at all times the fire watch is required.
  - f) Assure that the Fire Watch Officer has the skills and ability to perform prescribed duties and to meet all job qualifications.
  - g) Maintain an up-to-date directory of contact names and contact information for contacts including the UTHSC project manager, relevant shop supervisors, and UT Campus Police (901-448-4444) for reporting emergencies.
  - h) Maintain copies of all fire watch reports.
  - i) Post signs when an impairment of the fire protection system has occurred.
  - j) Perform a safety briefing prior to any work being initiated, with all personnel involved including applicable University staff.
- 3. Campus Safety shall:**
- a) Assist in training Fire Watch Officers upon request.
  - b) Facilitate taking fire protection equipment out of service upon request.
  - c) Revise the Fire Watch Procedure periodically.
- 4. UTHSC Facilities personnel, Contractors and Subcontractors shall:**
- a) Notify UTHSC FSO when a fire protection system is impaired, either whole or partially;
  - b) Ensure that a qualified fire watch program is in effect with the contractor/sub-contractor organization. The program is the responsibility of the Contractor and Subcontractors. If a contractor sub-contracts to complete the work, then the Contractor is responsible for verification and compliance of the hot work safety program of the subcontractor.
  - c) Ensure full adherence to UTHSC’s Building Fire Watch policy.
  - d) Provide certifications of training when applicable, and requested.
  - e) Ensure that his or her employees are appropriately trained and authorized.
  - f) Ensure that a safety briefing has been completed prior to any work initiated, with all personnel involved including applicable University staff.

## Definitions

Identify and define relevant terms relating to this procedure.

1. **AHJ:** Authority Having Jurisdiction
2. **SFMO:** State Fire Marshal’s Office
3. **Fire Protection System:** Approved devices, equipment, and systems or combination of systems used to detect a fire, activate an alarm, extinguish or control a fire, control or manage smoke, or products of a fire, or any combination thereof. Examples include: fire alarms, sprinklers, fire pumps, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.

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4. **Fire Watch Officer:** 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; aiding in the calm egress of the occupants, or protecting the public from fire or life safety dangers. A fire watch allows buildings to be temporarily occupied when the fire suppression systems or the fire alarms are out of service. The assignment of a Fire Watch Officer is required by the State of Tennessee Fire Marshall's office.
5. **Hot Work:** Any work involving welding, brazing, soldering, heat treating, grinding, powder-actuated tools, hot riveting and all other similar applications producing a spark, flame, or heat, or similar operations that are capable of initiating fires or explosions.
6. **NFPA:** National Fire Protection Association
7. **UTHSC FSO:** University of Tennessee Health Science Center Fire Safety Officer
8. **UTHSC PD:** University of Tennessee Health Science Center Police Department

## Procedure

### Requesting the Deactivation of Fire Protection Equipment

A request to disable fire protection equipment (e.g., smoke detectors, sprinklers, strobes, speakers, fire protection panels, etc.) must be submitted to the UTHSC FSO before performing work which may damage or impact fire protection equipment or performing dust generating activities (e.g., sanding, grinding, cutting, etc.) in the vicinity of a smoke detector. The UTHSC FSO can be contacted by emailing [firesafety@uthsc.edu](mailto:firesafety@uthsc.edu).

### Requesting a Fire Watch:

Personnel (UTHSC personnel or outside contractors) disabling the fire alarm system or its related equipment must request a fire watch by notifying the UTHSC FSO. The UTHSC FSO can be contacted by emailing [firesafety@uthsc.edu](mailto:firesafety@uthsc.edu).

Any person who has good reason to believe that the fire alarm system or its related equipment is out of order and poses a serious risk to person(s) or property in any occupied or unoccupied structure can request a fire watch by notifying the UTHSC Fire Safety Officer. At that time the UTHSC FSO shall investigate and activate the fire watch call procedure if necessary.

### Authorizing the Fire Watch:

A fire watch may be authorized once the UTHSC FSO has determined a watch is essential. Once a fire watch has been initiated, it shall remain in effect until such time that the UTHSC FSO cancels the watch. The UTHSC FSO will notify the City of Memphis Fire Department, and UTHSC PD informing them of any building Fire Watch activation.

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### **Cancelling the Fire Watch:**

A fire watch can be cancelled only after the alarm deficiencies have been repaired or ALL occupants have been relocated to another facility. Once it has been determined by a trained fire alarm technician that the system is fully functional, the UTHSC FSO or their designees, will declare an ALL CLEAR for the fire watch.

### **Selecting Fire Watch Personnel:**

Responsible and able-bodied individuals shall be selected to conduct Fire Watches. A fire watch must include dedicated staffing subject to the approval of the UTHSC FSO, SFMO, or other competent authority.

Fire Watch Officers must have the skills and abilities to perform prescribed duties and to meet all job qualifications. Fire Watch Officers are not expected to perform fire-fighting duties beyond the scope of the ordinary citizen. The individuals performing the fire watch are not permitted to perform any other duties.

Fire watchers must be familiar with the buildings and equipment they are watching. In addition to the facility's established fire emergency plan, watchers must know where manual fire alarm stations and fire protection equipment are located and be able to use them if necessary.

Fire watch personnel must also be able to use communication devices, such as walkie-talkies and be trained on filling out fire watch log sheets. Any person who meets these criteria may be a Fire Watch Officer. During a fire watch, however, a Fire Watch Officers' only job should be maintaining the fire watch.

### **Fire Watch Duties:**

The Fire Watch Officer function is to report any fire safety concerns to the UTHSC FSO, or UTHSC Police immediately.

Building evacuations, unless immediate life safety concerns prevail, by the Fire Watch Officer are not authorized. Building evacuations are only authorized by UTHSC Campus Administration, Chief Safety Officer, or UTHSC PD.

Fire Watch personnel shall continually conduct rounds by walking through the entire building or affected area, looking for evidence of smoke, fire, or other abnormal conditions. A specific route shall be laid out to ensure the entire Fire Watch Area is covered. The individual selected shall know the location of Alarm Pull Stations and Fire Extinguishers on the site.

Members of a fire watch must regularly and thoroughly check all parts of a building that are affected by the fire alarm and sprinkler failures. This includes attics, crawl spaces, storage rooms, resident rooms, employee break rooms and concealed areas. Watchers are required to keep a log sheet of the

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rounds they make while on fire watch. The log is usually kept in a central location to make it easily accessible and to verify that it is not being tampered with.

Individuals performing the manual fire watch are to:

1. Patrol all floors and public areas of the building on 1 hour intervals.
2. Immediately call 901-448-4444 if any fire, strong odor of smoke, or visible smoke is observed.
3. If the building’s fire alarm strobe horns are functional, activate the nearest manual fire alarm pull station.
4. If the building’s fire alarm strobe horns are not functional, UTHSC FSO will issue portable hand horns, and if needed, should be activated until all occupants have exited the building.
5. Inform the UTHSC FSO, UTHSC Police, and Memphis Fire Department of any locations of occupants that have not yet been notified.
6. Report any suspicious behaviors, circumstances, extinguished fires, burn marks, etc. to the FSO and UTHSC PD immediately.

**Fire Watch Logs:**

Fire Watch personnel shall continually conduct rounds by walking through the entire building or affected area, looking for evidence of smoke, fire, or other abnormal conditions. A specific route shall be laid out to ensure the entire Fire Watch Area is covered. The individual selected shall know the location of Alarm Pull Stations and Fire Extinguishers on the site.

Appendix A contains a sample log that shall be used to record the movements and areas checked by the FSO.

**Contractor Induced Outage of Mechanical Fire Protection Systems:**

If a contractor’s work requires that a fire alarm system be offline for work to be completed, the contractor is responsible for a fire watch throughout the area or building and at the fire alarm panel.

The fire watch involves having a qualified individual watching the fire alarm system and walking through the area and dialing UT Campus Police at 901-448-4444 in response to any fire alarm coming into the panel. This is the contractor’s responsibility and all costs associated with this fire watch will be the responsibility of the contractor.

The contractor must stay in continual contact with the UTHSC FSO during the period of the Fire Watch to advise of any updates, issues, or requests. The contractor shall maintain a fire watch log, and provide copies to the UTHSC FSO.

**General Training and Information Requirements**

**Fire Watch Officers:**

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Fire extinguishers are only valuable safety devices when one knows how to use them. Therefore, Fire Watch Officers shall be, at a minimum:

- Trained, in use of portable fire extinguishers. This includes types, selection, inspection, and use;
- Knowledgeable about emergency notification procedures, and emergency contact information.

### **Penalties/Disciplinary Action for Non-Compliance**

Failure to comply with this procedure may result in disciplinary action of employees or students and/or civil or criminal penalties. Non-UTHSC personnel (e.g., contractors) not in compliance may be removed from the job or have their contract cancelled.

### **Responsible Official & Additional Contacts**

<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Office Name</b>	<b>Telephone Number (xxx) xxx-xxxx</b>	<b>Email/Web Address</b>
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Campus Safety and Emergency Management	(901) 448-6114	safety@uthsc.edu
Policy Training	Campus Safety and Emergency Management	(901) 448-6114	safety@uthsc.edu

### **Related Policies/Guidance Documents**

- [UT System Policy SA0100](#)
- [UT System Policy SA0700](#)
- [FS5300 – Fire Protection Plan](#)
- [FS5303 – Hot Work Permits](#)
- NFPA 101, Life Safety Code
- OSHA, 29 CFR 1926.352, Fire prevention
- International Code Council/International Fire Code, 2015

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**Appendix A**  
 Example FIRE WATCH LOG

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 FIRE WATCH LOG

UTHSC BUILDING:	Date:	Watch Conducted By: (Printed Name)
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
UTHSC BUILDING:	Date:	Watch Conducted By: (Printed Name)
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials:
Area:	Time	Initials: