

## Requirements for Fire Alarm Control Panels

The purpose of this technical bulletin is to describe the requirements for fire alarm control panels. Fire alarm control panel installations shall comply with all the requirements of the 2015 International Building Code (IBC), 2015 International Fire Code (IFC), 2014 National Electric Code (NEC), and the 2013 National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code (NFPA72). In addition to these requirements, fire alarm control panels shall also comply with the requirements of this technical bulletin.

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### 1. New Fire Alarm Control Panels

#### a. Panel Location

In other than high-rise buildings, the fire alarm control panel shall be located in the main lobby at the entrance to the building or in a room such as a utility closet, electrical room or telephone room. The panel shall be protected against unauthorized access. If located in a room, the room shall be labeled according to Section 509 of the IFC.

In high-rise buildings, the fire alarm control panel shall be located in the fire command center as required by Section 911 of the IFC.

#### b. Remote Annunciators

When the fire alarm control panel will not be installed in the main lobby, a remote annunciator panel shall be provided inside the building at the main entrance.

#### c. Initiating Device Identification

The fire alarm system shall identify the specific initiating device address, location, device type, floor level where appropriate and status including indication of normal, alarm, trouble, and supervisory status, as appropriate. (IFC 907.6.3)

Exceptions:

1. Fire alarm systems in single story buildings less than 22,500 square feet.
2. Fire alarm systems that only include manual fire alarm boxes, waterflow initiating devices and not more than 10 additional alarm-initiating devices.
3. Special initiating devices that do not support individual device identification
4. Fire alarm systems or devices that are replacing existing equipment (see below).

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**d. Sites with Multiple Buildings**

Each individual building equipped with a fire alarm system shall have its own fire alarm control panel. The panels shall be permitted to be interconnected so that only one panel communicates with the supervising station. The signals sent to the supervising station must clearly identify the building in alarm so that firefighters are able to respond directly to the building in alarm. Per Section 23.8.2.9 of NFPA 72, silence and reset capabilities shall only be permitted at the panel of the building in which the signal originated.

Situations where multiple buildings on a site will share one fire alarm control panel may be approved under certain conditions. These situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Fire Marshal's Office and may be subject to additional requirements.

**e. Buildings with Multiple Fire Alarm Systems**

Situations where there are multiple fire alarm control panels protecting a single building may be approved under certain conditions. These situations will be reviewed on a case-case basis by the Fire Marshal's Office and may be subject to additional requirements.

**f. Communication Methods**

Communications methods which comply with Chapter 26 of NFPA 72 shall be permitted. Such methods include but are not limited to digital alarm communicator transmitters (DACTs), cellular communicators, and transmitters using Internet Protocol. Per Section 26.6.3.2.1.4 of NFPA 72, when using a DACT, only one phone line may be used along with another method approved by Section 26.6.3.2.1.4.

If IP communicators are used, they shall be installed in such a manner that will not allow the loss of communication with the supervising station when maintenance to the server is being performed.

**g. Replacement or Change in Communication Method**

The replacement or a change in the communication method for a fire alarm control panel shall be permitted prior to work commencing. No fee will be charged for the replacement or change in the communication method.

**2. Replacement of Existing Fire Alarm Control Panels**

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All fire alarm control panel upgrades and replacements shall require a permit and will have inspections from the Fire Marshal's Office.

Any situation where the fire alarm system will be placed out of service will need to comply with Section 901.7 of the IFC. Please contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (361) 485-3460 for any questions.

The replacement or upgrade of a fire alarm control panel will require the new fire alarm control panel comply with current code requirements. The status of the remainder of the fire alarm system shall be determined according to the scenarios listed below.

Section 34.616(b)(5) of the State of Texas Fire Alarm Rules requires the local AHJ be consulted to determine whether to update the entire system to comply with current code and if plans or a permit are required prior to making the repair.

**a. Panel Failure**

Replacement of a fire alarm control panel due to catastrophic (sudden, unexpected) failure will not require the existing fire alarm system to be upgraded to comply with current code requirements provided the new fire alarm control panel is from the same manufacturer and is the same model or the model that replaced it.

Any devices or appliances that need to be replaced due to the upgrade will be permitted to be replaced on a one-for-one basis in their existing locations. This is provided that the devices and appliances are installed in accordance with their listings and codes in effect when the system was installed.

**b. Recalls**

Fire alarm control panels subject to recalls shall follow the requirements provided by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the manufacturer. The Fire Marshal shall be notified by the building owner and fire alarm firm when the recalled components have been replaced or otherwise corrected.

**c. Model Discontinued and No Longer Supported by the Manufacturer**

A fire alarm control panel that has been discontinued and is no longer supported by the manufacturer shall be permitted to be

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upgraded to the next model which has replaced it. Any devices or appliances that need to be replaced due to the upgrade will be permitted to be replaced on a one-for-one basis in their existing locations. This is provided that the devices and appliances are installed in accordance with their listings and codes in effect when the system was installed.

**d. Voluntary Replacement of a Fire Alarm Control Panel**

Replacing a fully functioning control panel with a new panel from a different manufacturer will require the existing core areas of the building to meet current code requirements. Core areas include lobbies, public bathrooms, and common corridors.

**e. Tenant Improvements**

When a fire alarm control panel is not able to support new devices or appliances required for a building tenant improvement, the new panel and all work associated with the tenant improvements shall comply with current code requirements. In addition, core areas of the building must also be brought up to compliance with current code requirements. Core areas include lobbies, public bathrooms, and common corridors.

**f. Accessibility Upgrades**

Replacement of a fire alarm control panel in order to support ADA upgrades will not require the existing fire alarm system be upgraded to comply with current code requirements. All new fire alarm work associated with the ADA upgrades shall comply with current codes. Any existing devices or appliances which are not associated with the ADA upgrade will be permitted to be replaced on a one-for-one basis in existing locations. This is provided the devices and appliances are installed in accordance with their listings and codes in effect when the system was installed.

**g. Elevator Recall Control and Supervisory Panels**

All replacements of Elevator Recall Control and Supervisory Panels will require approval from the Fire Marshal. A meeting with the Fire Marshal may be required to discuss the design of the panel.

**h. Other Scenarios**

When a fire alarm control panel replacement is proposed that does not meet one of the scenarios A-F above, contact the Fire

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Marshal's Office to discuss the proposed system prior to any submissions.

**3. Fees**

Fees for fire alarm control panel replacements will be charged using the fire alarm fee schedule. The fee is based on the quantity of new devices being installed.

**4. Inspections**

All projects that include the installation of a new fire alarm control panel will require a 100% test of the fire alarm system during final inspection.

**5. Submittal Requirements**

All fire alarm control panel installations and/or replacements shall require the following to be submitted prior to any work:

Victoria FMO Permit Application

Technical Data Sheet(s) for the fire alarm control panel and any devices

Battery Calculations

Letter signed by APS that the existing devices are listed and/or approved to with the new fire alarm control panel

A permit will be issued by the Victoria Fire Marshal's Office. Any work started prior to the issuance of the permit will be subject to a No Permit Issued or On-Site Penalty.

Thomas J. Legler, FM, CFPS  
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