

Appalachian State University  
Fire Protection System Impairment Guidelines

Purpose

To establish guidelines for planned or unplanned fire protection system impairments due to construction, alterations, malfunction, special events, emergency conditions, etc.

Guidelines include measures to ensure risks are minimized and the duration of the impairments are limited. These guidelines shall apply to all fire protection systems which shall include; sprinkler systems/fire suppression systems, fire alarm systems and their components.

**Definitions**

Fire protection system - Approved devices, equipment and systems or combinations of systems used to detect a fire, activate an alarm, extinguish or control a fire, control or manage smoke and products of a fire or any combination thereof.

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 the fire department.

Impairment – A shutdown, in whole or in part, of a fire protection system.

**Guidelines for Impairments**

The Office of EHS&EM shall serve as the impairment coordinator for the University. Where a notification to EHS&EM is required under these guidelines, EHS&EM may also make notification to the following agencies:

Boone Fire Department  
Office of the State Fire Marshal, Risk Management Division

**Impairments**

Impairments of fire protection systems may be classified as planned or unplanned.

Planned impairments include, but are not limited to, fire protection systems that are placed out of service due to work that has been planned in advance, such as construction or maintenance. Special events may necessitate zoned/partial impairment to accommodate effects that may potentially create nuisance alarms. Special events will be considered planned impairments.

Unplanned impairments include, but are not limited to, the malfunction of a fire protection system, emergency situations such as burst water piping, fires, etc.

Both categories will necessitate measures to maintain life safety during the period of impairment.

### **Planned Impairments**

Planned impairments for special events shall submit a request to the Telecommunications Department and a notice to EHS&EM, no less than seven days prior to the event. Special event impairments will be evaluated by EHS&EM on a case by case basis to ensure safeguards are in place prior to the shutdown. The individual or group requesting the impairment shall be responsible for coordinating qualified personnel any cost or charges associated with the provisions for an approved fire watch. See Fire Watch Requirements, below, for further guidance.

Planned impairments for construction or maintenance shall notify EHS&EM no less than 48 hours prior to the anticipated impairment.

It shall be the responsibility of the personnel disabling fire protection systems to notify University Police, Boone Fire and EHS&EM prior to the start of these activities.

Notifications should include:

- Buildings/areas/equipment involved
- The extent and duration of the impairment.
- Verification that building/areas have been inspected and any increased risks determined/discussed.
- Any recommendations have been submitted to management or building management
- Verification that departments/supervisors/etc. in areas to be affected have been notified of the impairment.
- Impairment tags will be placed accordingly on equipment.
- Necessary tools and materials have been assembled on the impairment site to reduce disablement time.

### **Unplanned Impairments**

Unplanned impairments should be reported to University Police, Boone Fire and EHS&EM immediately.

Notification should include:

- Building/areas/equipment involved.
- The extent and expected duration of the impairment.
- Verification that departments/supervisors/etc. in areas to be affected have been notified of the impairment.
- Impairment tags have been placed accordingly on equipment.

- Any recommendations regarding implementation of a fire watch or other compensatory measure.

### **Disablement Tags**

Personnel making disablements should place a tag(s) indicating the fire protection system or what portion thereof has been impaired or placed out of service. These tags should be located at each fire department connection, system control valve, fire alarm control unit, fire alarm annunciator and fire command center indicating which system, or part thereof, is impaired.

### **Re-enablement**

It shall be the responsibility of personnel re-enabling fire protection systems to notify University Police and EHS&EM once systems are active.

Notification shall include:

- Verification that any necessary inspections and tests have been conducted to ensure that all fire protection systems are operational.
- Whether employees in the affected area have been notified of the restoration of the fire protection system.
- Verification that impairment tags have been removed.

### **Fire Watch**

During an impairment period a fire watch or building evacuation may be required until the fire protection system has been returned to service.

Where utilized, fire watch personnel shall be provided with at least one approved means of notification of the fire department and their only duty shall be to perform constant patrols of the protected premises and to keep watch for fires.

Additional requirements for fire watch personnel will include, but are not limited to:

- Fire watch personnel shall be trained in the University's procedures for reporting fires.
- Non-impaired, alert and awake at all times.
- Know the locations of fire protection devices, including fire alarm pull stations and fire extinguishers.
- Have a reliable means to contact 911 available at all times. For the purpose of these guidelines a cellular telephone is an approved means for notification of the fire department.

A Fire Protection Impairment form must be submitted to Telecommunications along with the Support Request ticket. The Fire Protection Impairment form may be found by clicking [here](#).

