

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE   
INSTITUTE for PUBLIC SERVICE

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

Chief Smokey Sparks  
Anytown Fire Department  
1610 University Avenue  
UT, Tennessee 37921-6741

February 8, 2016

Dear Chief Sparks:

You asked how your department might accommodate an occupancy in your city where the code required fire protection system, in this case the sprinkler system, is out of service for extensive repairs. The desire is to allow the owner to continue to use the property for its intended use while repairs are underway. The International Fire Code allows for a fire watch, if approved by the authority having jurisdiction, when fire protection systems out of service.

I have attached a sample fire watch policy that provides for the continuous presence of a trained person who maintains a constant fire watch while the required fire protection system is out of service. The person(s) providing the approved fire watch must have at least one approved means for notification of the fire department, and their only duty shall be to perform constant patrols of the protected premises and keep watch for fires.

It is important to keep good documentation on the fire watch while the fire protection system is out of service. Please let me know if you have any questions about this sample policy or if MTAS may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Dennis Wolf  
Fire Management Consultant  
UT-MTAS

This is a SAMPLE policy and should be customized to meet local needs.

## **Fire Watch Policy**

### **Purpose**

To provide fire watch requirements for an owner or responsible party when adequate egress is not available, when demolition of a building with hazardous conditions exists, or when a fire alarm or sprinkler system are in disrepair or nonfunctional.

### **Requirements**

Conduct periodic patrols of the entire facility. Patrol the facility every 15 minutes if the facility has people sleeping (such as a hotel, motel, apartment building, etc.), is an institutional facility, or an occupied assembly facility. Facilities not meeting the previous conditions shall be patrolled every 30 minutes. Property owners/managers can provide the fire watch with properly trained employees, or they may hire fire watch personnel from a licensed and bonded private security company.

### **Duties of Fire Watch Personnel**

Fire watch personnel shall:

- Have access to at least one approved means of communication.
- Know the exact address of the property, the cross-street, and how to report a fire or other emergency condition by calling 9-1-1.
- Be familiar with the buildings and property and have an accepted written plan for patrolling the property.
- Be trained in the use of fire extinguishers and shall have access to all facility fire extinguishers and know their location.
- Have knowledge of, and be trained on, the facility's evacuation plan in the event of a fire. They shall be able to communicate with non-English speaking residents/occupants well enough to give an evacuation order.
- Not be permitted, while on duty, to perform any other duties.
- Not be impaired and shall remain awake and alert at all times.
- Keep a log of fire watch related activities. The log shall include; address of the facility, time of each patrol, name of the fire watch person performing the patrol, and notes for any observations or other fire watch related activities performed.
- If a fire is discovered or suspected, immediately notify the fire department by dialing 911 or using the approved means of communication, notify all residents and /or person(s) in the immediate vicinity, and initiate evacuation of the premises.

## **Procedure**

The fire marshal shall review the request from the property owner for a fire watch. If the fire marshal determines that a fire watch is appropriate in the specific situation, the fire marshal may approve a fire watch in accordance with the requirements outlined above. A Fire Watch Form shall be completed and signed by the property owner and the fire marshal. A copy of the signed form shall remain on the premises for the duration of the fire watch.

## **Record Keeping**

A copy of all letters, correspondence, inspections, fire watch forms, etc. shall be included in the file for the affected occupancy. A copy of the approved fire watch form shall be forwarded to dispatch and to the first due fire stations for the affected occupancy.

**City of Anytown Fire Department Fire Watch Requirements**

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupancy No: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector Notified: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Fire Watch: \_\_\_\_\_

The required fire protection equipment for this premises was determined to be inoperable/non-compliant. As an alternative to evacuation/non-use of the building, you may establish a fire watch until the fire protection equipment/system is returned to full service. The fire watch person(s) shall:

- Have access to at least one approved means of communication.
- Know the exact address of the property, the cross-street, and how to report a fire or other emergency condition by calling 9-1-1.
- Be familiar with the buildings and property and have an accepted written plan for patrolling the property.
- Be trained in the use of fire extinguishers and shall have access to all facility fire extinguishers and know their location.
- Have knowledge of, and be trained on, the facility's evacuation plan in the event of a fire. They shall be able to communicate with non-English speaking residents well enough to give an evacuation order.
- Not be permitted, while on duty, to perform any other duties.
- Not be impaired and shall remain awake and alert at all times.
- keep a log of fire watch related activities that includes the address of the facility, time of each patrol, name of the fire watch person(s) performing the patrol, and notes for any observations or other fire watch related activities performed.
- If a fire is discovered or suspected immediately notify the fire department by dialing 911 or using the approved means of communication, notify all residents and /or person(s) in the immediate vicinity, and initiate evacuation of the premises.

These requirements were explained in person to the responsible person by the fire official.

Fire Official (Print Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Official Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Official Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to establish a fire watch according to the criteria herein set forth. I affirm I am the responsible party for the premises identified and will hold the City of Anytown harmless for any damages incurred from the enactment of this agreement.

Responsible Party (Print Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Party Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Party Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

**A copy of this signed form must remain on the premises with the fire watch person(s).**