

OXNARD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Watch Guidelines

What is a Fire Watch?

A Fire Watch is a temporary measure intended to ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of an activity, 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.

When do I need to have a Fire Watch?

A Fire Watch is required under the California Fire Code (CFC) for four reasons:

- 1) Pursuant to CFC §403.1 - When, in the opinion of the fire code official (also known as the Oxnard Fire Department Fire Marshal or his designee) it is essential for public safety in a place of assembly or any other place where people congregate, because of the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity, the owner, agent or lessee shall provide one or more fire watch personnel, as required and approved, to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public, or when such activity is being conducted.
- 2) Pursuant to CFC §901.7 - Where a required fire protection system (such as a Fire Alarm System or Automatic Fire Sprinkler System) is out of service, the fire department and the fire code official shall be notified immediately and, where required by the fire code official (generally when systems are out of service for 4 or more hours), the building shall either be evacuated or an approved fire watch shall be provided for all occupants left unprotected by the shutdown until the fire protection system has been returned to service.
- 3) Pursuant to CFC §1405.5 - When required by the fire code official for building demolition that is hazardous in nature, qualified personnel shall be provided to serve as an on-site fire watch. Fire watch personnel shall be provided with at least one approved means for notification of the fire department and their sole duty shall be to perform constant patrols and watch for the occurrence of fire.
- 4) As required by the Fire Code Official whenever a hazardous condition is present.

Who is required to provide a Fire Watch?

The owner, agent or lessee of any building or activity whenever the above situations occur. The Oxnard Fire Department may require you to provide a Fire Watch however, it is **not** the responsibility of the Oxnard Fire Department to provide personnel to conduct a Fire Watch, although in certain circumstances we may provide Fire Prevention Staff at a charge to you.

What is required by me as an owner, agent or lessee?

- 1) You shall provide a Fire Watch during the entire time an activity that requires a fire watch is being conducted until all attendees have left the premises. The Fire Watch is required on a 24-hour basis whenever a fire protection system is out of service (unless the Fire Code Official approves otherwise).

- 2) You shall provide Fire Watch personnel the area to be patrolled and complete access to **all** areas of the activity or building in which the Fire Watch is conducted.
- 3) You shall provide a means of direct communication, such as a cell phone, to the Fire Watch for them to contact 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency. When multiple Fire Watch personnel are required, two-way radios shall be provided to each person on Fire Watch to communicate with each other and a centrally located administrative staff member.

What is required by me as an owner, agent or lessee? (Continued)

- 4) You shall provide each Fire Watch personnel with a method of alerting building occupants and an evacuation procedure.
- 5) You shall provide each Fire Watch personnel with a procedure for reactivating any sprinkler valves or other fire protection systems, if possible.

What is required for a fire watch?

Personnel

Personnel determined by the building or activity owner, agent or lessee to conduct the Fire Watch shall:

- 1) Be a responsible adult at least 18 years of age,
- 2) Be able to speak English clearly,
- 3) Be able to move throughout the building or activity safely,
- 4) Be thoroughly familiar with the building or activity they are patrolling such as all electrical shut off devices and main power cut-offs as well as shut-offs for gas, oil, process water and any other areas that may be either hazardous to fire personnel or add fuel to any fire situation. Fire watch personnel must know the location of any fire extinguisher, sprinkler system controls, hose connections and all fire protection equipment in the structure or site.
- 5) Fire watch personnel shall be familiar of all hazardous material locations and dangerous processes within the structure and site, along with storage areas for products that add fuel to combustion. Fire watch personnel shall be familiar with any pre-emergency plans and emergency plans that exist for the structure. Fire watch personnel must know their responsibility under any emergency plan in effect.
- 6) Be capable of recognizing and responding to a fire emergency in an efficient and appropriate manner.

A professional security company is not required, however they may be utilized for the Fire Watch if they meet the above requirements. Building or activity familiarity may be met through training and personal walkthrough of the location.

Duties

Personnel serving as a fire watch have the following responsibilities:

General

- 1) Conduct periodic patrols of the interior of the entire building as specified.

- 2) During the rounds, fire watch personnel shall make a thorough inspection of the building or spaces assigned to him/her noting at a minimum the following:
 - a. Outside doors and windows are closed and locked; fire doors are closed and not chained or tampered with to prevent exiting the structure.
 - b. All oily waste rags, paint residue, rubbish, etc., are in proper closed containers or removed from the building.
 - c. All fire apparatus such as extinguisher hose lines, etc., are in place and not obstructed.
 - d. Aisles and exit ways are clear and not obstructed.
 - e. Motors and machines not required to be running are shut off.
 - f. All offices, conference rooms, file rooms, shall be checked.

Duties – General (Continued)

- g. All gas and electric heaters or other heating equipment checked regularly.
 - h. All hazardous processes or manufacturing processes are in safe condition.
 - i. Flammable and combustible materials are properly stored in containers or in storage areas.
 - j. All sprinkler valves required to be open are chained in the open position.
 - k. Particular attention shall be given to any areas of new construction or alteration areas for fire.
 - l. Concealed spaces, basements, storage area, build-ups, penthouses and similar areas shall be checked.
- 3) Identify any fire, life or property hazards.
- 4) Have at least one means of direct communication with the Fire Department. One of the means of communication must be a cell phone.
- 5) Immediately report all discovered fire **hazards** to owner, agent or lessee for immediate correction.
- 6) Maintain a log of fire watch activities including hazards found, when and to whom they were reported.

In the event of fire or odor of smoke

- 1) Immediately notify the Oxnard Fire Department by calling 9-1-1 with the exact address and the extent of fire involvement.
- 2) Notify the occupants of the facility of the need to evacuate. If the sirens or public address function of the alarm system are still functional, use them to assist with the evacuation of the building.
- 3) **Fire watch personnel cannot have other duties besides their assigned fire watch**, unless directed by the Fire Department. **The fire watch will not perform fire-fighting duties beyond the scope of the ordinary citizen.**

Frequency of Inspection

Buildings or activities shall have a fire watch patrol **every 60 minutes**.

Fire watch personnel shall patrol the entire building or activity **every 30 minutes** in the following situations:

- 1) The building or activity has people sleeping.
- 2) The building or activity is an institutional occupancy.

- 3) The building or activity is an occupied assembly occupancy.

Number of Fire Watch Personnel

- 1) One Fire Watch personnel shall be provided per each 100,000 square feet of gross floor area for general businesses, apartment complexes, events and similar structures or activities.
- 2) One Fire Watch personnel shall be provided per each 500,000 square feet of gross floor area for open warehouses.
- 2) One Fire Watch personnel shall be provided for each 100 units of residential occupancy (such as a care facility).
- 3) These numbers may be modified by the Fire Code Official as deemed necessary.

Record Keeping

A fire watch log shall be maintained at the facility. The log must be available to the Oxnard Fire Department at all times during the fire watch. The log will show the following;

- 1) The address of the facility.
- 2) Times the patrol has commenced for each tour of the facility.
- 3) Name of the person(s) conducting the fire watch.
- 4) Record of any communication(s) to the Fire Department and/or monitoring company.
- 5) Record of any unsafe conditions.
- 6) Record of any corrective actions taken to remedy any unsafe conditions.
- 5) Record of other information as directed by the Fire Department.
- 6) The log shall be faxed **daily** to the Office of the Fire Marshal serving your area (see front page).

When may I cancel my Fire Watch?

The owner, agent or lessee may cancel the Fire Watch once the activity requiring the Fire Watch has concluded and all attendees have left the premises, or fire alarm and/or the fire suppression system(s) has been fully restored.

Once the fire watch has been cancelled, the owner, agent or lessee must notify the monitoring company and the Oxnard Fire Department during normal business hours. If repairs are completed after normal business hours, or on the weekend, notify the Oxnard Fire Department the next business day.

