

## LOSS CONTROL TOOLS

# Fire Alarm Systems

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Fire alarm systems detect the unwanted presence of fire by monitoring the environmental changes associated with combustion. They can be either automatic or manually activated. Automatic systems can detect one or more combinations of heat, smoke, flames or carbon dioxide. They can notify building occupants of an emergency, summon emergency services and modify building systems to help contain the fire. Manual pull stations can allow occupants to engage the system at a very early stage.

Fire detection and alarm systems should be installed by an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certified fire alarm installer in compliance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Code, Section 72. The system should be connected with a dedicated telephone line to an Underwriters Laboratories listed fire alarm control monitoring station.

Alarm devices usually consist of an audible alarm coupled with a visual alert device, such as a strobe light. Audible alarms can be horns, bells or sirens.



There are also tactile alarm devices that vibrate and olfactory devices that give off a distinct odor. These are used to assist disabled persons in confirming that an emergency exists. Frequently, an automated or manual voice system is also activated to give further instructions to occupants.

Buildings without sprinkler systems are required to have heat detectors in all rooms as well as smoke detectors.

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Manual pull alarm systems should be located in all stairwells and within 150 feet of any occupant.



There should be a backup battery or power system with full surge protection in place.

Occupants should have emergency phone numbers and evacuation routes available, along with identified assembly areas. Fire extinguishers should be clearly visible and easily assessable.

First aid kit boxes should be located near manual pull stations.

It is a good idea to hold fire drills at least every two months, so occupants are familiar with evacuation procedures.

### **Source Materials**

National Fire Protection Association [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

OSHA [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

Underwriters Laboratories [www.ul.com](http://www.ul.com)

*These guidelines are intended to offer general suggestions for follow up and discussion and should not be considered a substitution for professional advice. You are strongly urged to seek the services of a professional fire protection installer and engineer in these areas.*