

A Campus Fire Safety Message from



Homeland Security
and Emergency Services

Fire Prevention
and Control

Fire Department Notification

The Fire Code of New York State requires notification of the fire department immediately upon activation of a fire alarm signal. This sounds like a logical mandate easily complied with, however, many colleges and universities have had difficulty determining how to do so - particularly in regards to residential occupancies.

This difficulty is based on determining what constitutes a “fire alarm signal.”

Using previously applied interpretations of the Fire Code, a fire alarm signal is that which initiated by any device (manual fire alarm box, detector, sprinkler water flow switch, etc.) connected to a building’s fire alarm system and which activates alarm notification appliances (bells, horns, strobe lights) throughout a building to provide warning to occupants.

Many residence hall sleeping rooms are equipped with smoke alarms, some are equipped with smoke detectors. What’s the difference? A smoke alarm is an “all in one” device which senses products of combustion and sounds an audible (and sometimes visible) warning. Smoke alarms might also be connected to a building’s fire alarm system. A smoke detector is strictly a sensing device and must be connected to a building’s fire alarm system and, thus, alarm notification appliances.

In determining compliance with section §F401.3.2 of the Fire Code of New York State, the Office of Fire Prevention and Control assesses the following conditions:

If a building’s fire alarm system is activated and the alarm notification appliances are sounding/ flashing, the fire department must be notified.

If a smoke alarm not connected to a building’s fire alarm system is sounding and, thus, the building’s fire alarm notification appliances are not sounding/flashing, the fire department is not required to be notified. However, OFPC urges careful consideration of policies which provide for delay in notifying the fire department as time lost investigating an alarm can never recovered should there be a fire.

The Fire Code of New York State only prescribes the responsibilities of building owners, managers and staff. The form and manner in which a fire department responds to a notification of a fire alarm is not within the scope of the Fire Code or other statute or regulation.

Colleges and universities may wish to review the recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force on Campus Fire Safety pertaining to fire alarm systems. They are contained in the task force report at: www.dhSES.ny.gov/ofpc/publications/documents/campusfire.pdf



§F401.3.2 Alarm activations. Upon activation of a fire alarm signal, employees or staff shall immediately notify the fire department.