

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS <b>CODE BULLETIN OF INFORMATION</b> <b>No. B-9905</b>		CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA <hr/> TITLE 4 — BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPANCY CODE
SUBJECT OF BULLETIN:  SPRINKLERS IN LIGHT HAZARD OCCUPANCIES;  HIGH-RISE RETROFIT		REFERENCE CODE SECTION(S):  B-906.2.1 [NFPA 13-96] F-503.4.2
ISSUED BY		ISSUE DATE
NAME: David L. Wismer, P.E., C.B.O.	SIGNATURE:	May 17, 1999
TITLE: Director of Planning and Code Development		PAGE 1 OF 2

**NOTICE:**

On October 23, 1998, a set of new regulations to the *Building Construction and Occupancy Code* became effective. These regulations include updated editions of a number of standards referenced by the codes. Among them is the update of the National Fire Protection Association *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems* (NFPA 13) from the 1994 to the 1996 edition. NFPA 13 is referenced from the *Philadelphia Fire Prevention Code* Section F-503.4 and the *Philadelphia Building Code* Section B-906.2.1 for the installation of sprinkler systems in buildings not covered by the residential sprinkler systems referenced in Sections B-906.2.2 and B-906.2.3.

Section 5-2.1.3 of the 1996 NFPA 13 requires that the sprinklers installed in light hazard occupancies be of the quick-response type. Exceptions are listed for: installations that use residential sprinklers; modifications or additions to existing systems that have standard response sprinklers; and replacement of sprinklers on existing systems that have standard response sprinklers.

Light hazard occupancies include the majority of applications that the department processes. They are listed in the Appendix to NFPA 13, Section A-1-4.7.1 and include, but are not limited to, apartments, churches, clubs, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, libraries, museums, offices, restaurant seating areas, and theaters.

Previous editions of NFPA 13 permitted the quick response sprinklers as an option, but did not require them for these occupancies.

**ISSUE:**

A question that involves a number of permit applications, is whether the requirement for the quick-response sprinklers is applicable to the remaining fit-out of the existing high-rise buildings that are subject to *Philadelphia Fire Prevention Code* Section F-503.4.2. This section requires that complete sprinkler protection be installed in all high-rise buildings (except those portions occupied as Use Group R-2) by December 17, 1999.

The requirement of the new standard is clearly not applicable to those buildings that obtained their final permits to install sprinklers prior to 9/17/98 as required by the Fire Prevention Code. The issue should in fact be moot since the permit deadline is passed, but there are a number of buildings that are operating under a schedule adjustment by variance, are reacting to notices of violation, or are simply delinquent but have not yet been cited.

The question is whether NFPA 13, Section 5-2.1.3, Exception No. 2 applies to these buildings.

**DIRECTION:**

For those high-rise buildings subject to F-503.4.2 where the department has processed or will process applications after the 10/23/98 effective date of the new standard, we will permit the use of standard response sprinklers in light hazard occupancies. We will, of course, approve the use of quick response sprinklers as required by the 1996 NFPA 13 for new installations.

This direction is primarily based on the intent, if not the letter, of the second exception to NFPA Section 5-2.1.3. Other factors that weigh into the decision include consideration that the *Fire Prevention Code* required pre-design and permitting of water supplies in 1994 and a number of contract documents were in place before the adoption of the new standard.

The department believes that this approach is a rational one for our constituency and satisfies the spirit and intent of the applicable codes, regulations and referenced standards in this matter.

Any applications for sprinkler installation other than the high-rise retrofit discussed above, are subject to the requirements as specified in the regulatory documents.