

## FAQ:

# When is fire alarm monitoring required for an existing building under the Philadelphia Fire Code?

### Background

The fire protection and life safety system provisions of Chapter 9 of the Philadelphia Fire Code apply to buildings of new construction, or when deemed applicable because of a change in occupancy, alteration or addition, unless the provision explicitly references existing buildings or systems.

The provisions applicable to new construction, change in occupancy, and additions, parallel and duplicate the requirements contained in Chapter 9 of the current edition of the Philadelphia Building Code. Those provisions referencing existing buildings accommodate the continued use of buildings that comply with the code under which the building was designed and constructed while maintaining minimum safety standards of the Code that apply retroactively to all buildings.

Chapter 9 of the Philadelphia Fire Code includes a general reference to alarm system monitoring requirements applicable to buildings of new construction, or because of a change in occupancy, alteration, or addition:

*Section F-907.6.6. Monitoring. Fire alarm systems required by this chapter or by the International Building Code shall be monitored by an approved supervising station in accordance with NFPA 72.*

*Exception: Monitoring by a supervising station is not required for:*

- 1) Single- and Multiple-station smoke alarms required by Section 907.2.10
- 2) Smoke detectors in Group I-3 occupancies
- 3) Automatic sprinkler systems in one- or two-family dwellings.

Chapter 9 of the Philadelphia Fire Code also includes a provision applicable to existing buildings for alarm system monitoring:

*Section F-901.11.1. Monitoring of fire alarm systems. In buildings constructed on or after January 1, 2004, and in buildings constructed prior to January 1, 2004, containing a Group I or H occupancy or High-Rise Buildings, the fire alarm system shall be monitored in accordance with Section F-901.11.*

The above provisions must be applied separately. Section F-907.6.6. applies only to new construction and when deemed applicable because of a change in occupancy, alteration, or addition. Section F-901.11.1 applies retroactively to all existing buildings.

### Answer:

Fire alarm systems in existing buildings require monitoring under the following conditions:

1. The building was constructed on or after January 1, 2004. The code edition under which the building was constructed shall establish the construction date; therefore, all buildings constructed under the 2004 Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code or later shall require monitoring of a fire alarm system.
  - a. Note exceptions for alarm system monitoring requirements under Section F-907.6.6.
2. The building is classified as a high-rise building, regardless of construction date.
3. The building contains a Group I or H occupancy, regardless of construction date.
  - a. Note exception for alarm system monitoring requirements under Section F-907.6.6 for smoke detectors in Group I-3 occupancies.
4. The building underwent a change in occupancy, alteration, or addition requiring a new or upgraded fire alarm system meeting the requirements for alarm system monitoring under Chapter 9 of the Philadelphia Building Code.

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**Questions?** Call 311 or (215) 686-8686 (if outside Philadelphia) or submit an online form via <http://www.phila.gov/li/get-help>.

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This interpretation, policy or code application is intended to provide guidance to staff for consistency of review and is subject to change without notice. Application of this interpretation, policy or code application to specific projects may vary. There may be other ways to comply with the Code. If so, you are not required to use this method. You may want to investigate other options or consult with a professional identifying an equally code compliant solution.