



Commercial Buildings Frequently Asked Questions

IBC 907.2, NFPA 72 s. 4.4.5 Does the requirement that fire alarm control units be protected mean that I must protect all annunciator panels if they include a reset function?

Answer: No. Although NFPA 72 requires the protection of a fire alarm control unit, we will not apply that requirement to an annunciator panel, even when the system can be reset from that panel. It has been determined that the best way to differentiate is to use the UL listing for the unit.

If the component is UL listed as a fire alarm control unit, then a smoke detector is required above it. If the component is UL listed as an annunciator panel (even if the system can be reset from it), then a smoke detector will not be required above it. It also helps to understand that a UL-listed annunciator panel (even if it includes a reset function) is a component that can be removed from the system and the system will still maintain its integrity. If the wires to the annunciator panel become disabled, a trouble signal is sent to the main fire alarm control unit that is protected. (June 30, 2008)

IBC 907.5.2.1 Do the minimum sound pressures listed [75 dBA for R & I-1; 90 dBA for mechanical room; and 60 dBA for all others] in this code section supersede the requirement that calls for the sound pressures to be 15 decibels (dBA) above the average ambient sound level or 5 dBA above the maximum sound pressure level of a lengthy duration?

Answer: This is a code provision that provides performance language that does not align well with a "yes" or "no" answer. In essence, the minimum sound pressures listed govern until such time as the average sound plus 15 dBA, or the maximum sound plus 5 dBA, exceeds those minimums. In essence, it is the higher sound pressure that governs and that determines which holds precedence. (September 1, 2011)

IBC 907.5.2.3.4 Does the requirement that all dwelling units be “provided with the capability to support visible notification appliances” mean that I must install the wiring and boxes for a future installation?

Answer: No. Although pre-wiring of the dwelling for the future installation of a visible alarm notification appliance is one way of satisfying this performance language, it is not the only solution. The code official can allow other methodologies proposed by the designer. It is assumed the owner is in agreement with the alternative methodology being proposed by the designer. (September 1, 2011)

NFPA 72 4.4.5, IBC 907.2 Does the requirement that fire alarm control units be protected mean that I must protect all annunciator panels if they include a reset function?

Answer: No. Although NFPA 72 requires the protection of a fire alarm control unit, we will not apply that requirement to an annunciator panel, even when the system can be reset from that panel. To help understand why one is protected while one is not, it helps to recognize the difference. The NFPA definition of fire alarm control unit is "A system component that receives inputs from automatic and manual fire alarm devices and might supply power to detection devices and to a

transponder or off-premises transmitter". The definition of annunciator is "A unit containing one or more indicator lamps, alphanumeric displays, or other equivalent means in which each indication provides status information about a circuit, condition, or location". Because some fire alarm control units may also include annunciating capabilities, we look elsewhere to delineate. It has been determined that the best way to differentiate is to use the UL listing for the unit. If the component is UL listed as a fire alarm control unit, then a smoke detector is required above it. If the component is UL listed as an annunciator panel (even if the system can be reset from it), then a smoke detector will not be required above it. It also helps to understand that a UL-listed annunciator panel (even if it includes a reset function) is a component that can be removed from the system and the system will still maintain its integrity. If the wires to the annunciator panel become disabled, a trouble signal is sent to the main fire alarm control unit that is protected. (June 30, 2008)