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Commercial Buildings Frequently Asked Questions

NFPA 72 10.4.4, IBC 907.4.1 - 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.