



OKLAHOMA CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Marshal's Office

Interpretation

Interpretation #: OKCAHJ-2018-02	Subject of Interpretation: Delayed and Staged Evacuation Strategies for Schools	
Code Reference: 2009 IFC 404.1, 404.3 and 408.3		
Reviewed By: Robert Crisp	Title: Assistant Fire Marshal	Effective Date: 4/16/2018
Approved By: Harold Thompson	Title: Fire Marshal	Revision Date: N/A

Purpose:

To provide uniform guidelines for the delayed or staged evacuation of occupants within a school building equipped with an adequate level of fixed fire protection.

- **DELAYED EVACUATION:** Allows a predetermined amount of time for building staff to investigate the source of a fire alarm signal prior to evacuation.
- **STAGED EVACUATION:** Allows occupants to temporarily relocate to a separate fire area within the building while the source of the alarm is investigated.

Because the response time and capabilities of local fire and law enforcement agencies can vary greatly, approvals for delayed or staged evacuation will be made on a case-by-case basis dependent upon the specific fire protection and construction features of each building. For this reason it is highly recommended that such plans are developed with the input and approval of the Fire Marshal's Office prior to implementation.

Description of Code Reference:

2009 International Fire Code (IFC) Section 404.3.1(1) states, "Fire evacuation plans shall include emergency egress or escape routes and whether evacuation of the building is to be complete or, where approved, by selected floors or areas only".

Policy based on the Interpretation of the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ):

Delayed Evacuation

The Fire Marshal's Office will allow schools to develop plans not requiring the immediate evacuation of students and staff when approved. Delayed evacuation allows students and teachers to remain in the classroom while trained staff members investigate the source of the fire alarm signal. In order for delayed evacuation to be acceptable, the school must meet all of the following requirements:

1. The building must be protected throughout by a complete automatic sprinkler system OR protected with a fire alarm system per IFC Section 907 having complete corridor smoke detection and point-addressable technology so that the alarm location will be displayed at the fire alarm control panel and at all annunciator panels.
2. The building's fire alarm system must be able to utilize a positive alarm sequencing (PAS) to allow for investigation of the alarm. PAS delays the notification appliances (horn/strobes) from activating while an approved staff member investigates the source of the fire alarm signal. Utilizing the PAS system would consist of the following:

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- a. When a general fire alarm condition occurs, the alarm signal shall be acknowledged at the fire alarm control panel (FACP) by approved personnel within 15 seconds of annunciation. If the signal is not acknowledged within 15 seconds, notification signals shall be automatically and immediately activated.
- b. If the alarm is acknowledged, school personnel shall have an alarm investigation phase of up to 180 seconds to evaluate the fire alarm condition and reset the system when appropriate.
- c. If the system has not been reset by the end of the alarm investigation phase, notification signals shall be automatically and immediately activated.
- d. If a hazardous condition is confirmed during the investigation period, the fire alarm will be activated immediately by staff via a manual pull station without waiting for the investigation period to expire.
- e. If no report from investigating staff is received within the predetermined time period (up to 180 seconds), the positive alarm sequencing function will initiate the fire alarm automatically.
- f. If during the investigation period it is determined that the source of the alarm is non-hazardous, the alarm signal may be reset. Note that the alarm must not be reset unless the source of the alarm has been confirmed as non-hazardous or if it is determined that a lockdown condition exists.

Note: The activation of a second detection device greatly increases the likelihood of a fire condition, the positive alarm sequencing will be automatically suspended and the general fire alarm will sound throughout the building.

Note: If during the investigation phase a fire condition is verified, staff will have the ability to immediately suspend the positive alarm sequencing and activate the general fire alarm via a manual pull station.

Staged Evacuation

The Fire Marshal's Office will allow school buildings to use staged evacuation procedures when approved. Staged evacuation allows students and staff to relocate to a different fire area within the building, which may be desirable during times of inclement weather. For the purposes of this guideline, fire areas are defined as areas within the building that are separated from other spaces with fire-resistance-rated construction, and provide either a direct or protected path of egress to the exterior.

In order for staged evacuation to be acceptable the school must meet all the following requirements:

1. The building must be protected throughout by a complete automatic sprinkler system OR protected with a fire alarm system per IFC Section 907 having complete corridor smoke detection and point-addressable technology so that the alarm location will be displayed at the fire alarm control panel and at all annunciator panels.
2. The building must have a complete and operational public address system (or equivalent) that is audible throughout the building.

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3. The building must have separate and defined fire areas within the building.
4. The means of egress from staging areas must be capable of accommodating the number of occupants assigned to that area.
5. Plans must be developed by the school and need to be specific to the school in question. The plan should outline responsibilities for alarm investigation and instructions for staff and students. The following components must be included in the plan:
 - a. Separate fire areas within the building must be established.
 - b. Upon activation of the alarm, occupants will relocate to their designated staging area which may include the gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, or similar locations.
 - c. Assigned staff will immediately investigate the source of the fire alarm signal and shall have an effective means of communication such as two-way portable radios or a two-way public address system.
 - d. If a hazardous fire condition is confirmed the building shall be immediately evacuated. Thus, the plan must include procedures for temporarily silencing the alarm signal so that an evacuation order can be communicated to the building occupants via the public address system.

In schools where delayed or staged evacuation is approved, such procedures must be practiced when conducting fire evacuation drills required by the IFC. Additionally, each required drill must also include the complete evacuation of the building so that students and staff receive sufficient practice and training. Schools are encouraged to conduct fire evacuation drills with the assistance of their local fire station when possible.

The Fire Marshal's Office reserves the right to rescind or revoke approval of this strategy if the school no longer meets the criteria above or it has been shown that the agreed upon procedures have not been followed.