



# Requirements for Fire Alarm Control Panels

TECHNICAL BULLETIN  
**FIRE-9-2**

City of San Diego  
Development Services Department

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The purpose of this technical bulletin is to describe the requirements for fire alarm control panels (FACPs). FACP installations shall comply with all the requirements of this technical bulletin along with the current adopted editions of the California Building Code (CBC), California Fire Code (CFC), California Electrical Code (CEC), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code (NFPA 72).

## **I. NEW FIRE ALARM CONTROL PANELS**

The following requirements will be applicable for installation of new FACPs.

### **A. Panel Location**

In other than high-rise buildings, the FACP shall be located either in the main lobby at the entrance to the building or in a room such as a utility closet, electrical room or telephone room. The panel shall be protected against unauthorized access. If located in a room, the room shall be labeled in accordance with CFC 509. Working clearances shall comply with CEC Article 110.

Other panel locations can be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Life Safety Plan Review Section of the Development Services Department, and may be subject to additional requirements.

In high-rise buildings, the FACP shall be located in the fire command center as required by CBC 911.

### **B. Remote Annunciators**

When the FACP will not be installed in the main lobby, a remote annunciator panel shall be provided inside the building at the main entrance. If the building does not have a main entrance, the remote annunciator shall be placed on the address side of the building.

### **C. Sites With Multiple Buildings**

Each individual building equipped with a fire alarm system shall have a separate FACP. The panels shall be permitted to be interconnected so that only one panel communicates with the supervising station. The signals sent to the supervising station must clearly identify the specific building in alarm. Silence and reset capabilities shall only be permitted at the panel of the building where the signal originated.

Situations where multiple buildings on a site share one FACP may be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Life Safety Plan Review Section of the Development Services Department and may be subject to additional requirements.

### **D. Communications Methods**

Communications methods which comply with NFPA 72, Chapter 26 and are listed by the California State Fire Marshal shall be permitted. Such methods include but are not limited to digital alarm communicator transmitters (DACTs), cellular communicators, and transmitters using Internet Protocol (IP).

Only one phone line may be used along with another method approved by NFPA 72 Chapter 26 when using a DACT.

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If IP communicators are used, they shall be installed in such a manner that will not allow the loss of communication with the supervising station when maintenance to the server is being performed.

**E. Disable Buttons**

“Hot” buttons on FACPs shall not be programmed to disable notification appliances or any other life safety functions being controlled by the FACP.

**F. Combination Fire and Burglar Alarm Panels**

Combination fire and burglar alarm systems shall not be permitted. Combination panels listed by the California State Fire Marshal for commercial fire alarm use are permitted provided that they are only used for fire alarm purposes.

**II. REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING FIRE ALARM CONTROL PANELS**

All FACP upgrades and replacements require permits and require inspections from the Development Services Department. Please refer to Information Bulletin 137 for information on How to Obtain a Permit for Fire Alarm Systems.

Any situation where the fire alarm system will be placed out of service will need to comply with [FBP Policy D-15-04](#). Please contact the City of San Diego Fire Prevention Bureau at (619) 533-4400 for any questions regarding FBP Policy D-15-04.

The replacement or upgrade of a FACP will require the new FACP comply with current code requirements. The upgrade of the fire alarm system shall be determined according to the scenarios listed below.

**A. Panel Failure**

Replacement of a FACP due to catastrophic failure will not require the existing fire alarm system be upgraded to comply with current code requirements. Any devices or appliances that need to be replaced due to the upgrade will be permitted to be replaced on a one-for-one basis in the existing locations, provided that the devices and appliances are installed in accordance with their listings and codes in effect when the system was installed.

**B. Model Discontinued and/or No Longer Supported by the Manufacturer**

A FACP that has been discontinued and is no longer supported by the manufacturer shall be permitted to be upgraded to the next model which has replaced it. Any devices or appliances that need to be replaced due to the upgrade will be permitted to be replaced on a one-for-one basis in their existing locations, provided that the devices and appliances are installed in accordance with their listings and codes in effect when the system was installed.

**C. Voluntary Replacement of a Fire Alarm Control Panel**

Replacing a functional FACP with a new panel from a different manufacturer will require the existing core areas of the building be upgraded to meet current code requirements. Core areas include lobbies, public bathrooms, common corridors, and means of egress pathways.

**D. Tenant Improvements**

When a FACP is not able to support new devices or appliances required for a building tenant improvement, the new panel and all new work associated with the tenant improvement shall comply with current code requirements. In addition, core areas of the

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building must also be brought up to compliance with current code requirements. Core areas include lobbies, public bathrooms, common corridors, and means of egress pathways.

#### **E. Accessibility Upgrades**

Replacement of a FACP in order to support ADA upgrades will not require the existing fire alarm system be upgraded to comply with current code requirements. All new fire alarm work associated with the ADA upgrades shall comply with current codes. Any existing devices or appliances which are not associated with the ADA upgrade will be permitted to be replaced on a one for-one basis in the existing locations. This is provided the devices and appliances are installed in accordance with their listings and codes in effect when the system was installed.

#### **F. Smoke Control**

All replacements of Firefighter's Smoke Control Panels will require a smoke control review. A meeting with the fire alarm reviewer and the smoke control reviewer may be required to discuss the design of the panel.

Where a FACP is replaced and that FACP interfaces with a Firefighter's Smoke Control Panel or controls a smoke control system, a sequence of operations for the smoke control system must be provided on the plans.

#### **G. Other Scenarios**

When a FACP replacement is proposed that does not meet one of the scenarios A-F above, contact the Life Safety Plan Review Section of the Development Services Department to discuss the proposed system prior to any submissions.

### **III. INSPECTIONS**

All projects that include the installation of a new FACP will require a 100% test of the fire alarm system during final inspection. Systems shall not be transferred to a new panel prior to final inspection.

Projects that interface with a smoke control system will also require smoke control inspection by both the Special Inspector and the smoke control reviewer to verify that the functions of smoke control are consistent with the original design. Refer to Technical Bulletin BLDG-9-1, Design and Testing Requirements for Smoke Control Systems, for additional information.

#### **Documents Referenced in this Technical Bulletin**

- **California Building Code, ([CBC](#))**
- **California Fire Code, ([CFC](#))**
- **California Electrical Code, ([CEC](#))**
- **National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code, ([NFPA 72](#))**
- **[FPB Policy D-15-4](#), Disrupted Service—Fire Protection Systems**
- **[Information Bulletin 137](#), How to Obtain a Permit for Fire Alarm Systems**
- **[Information Bulletin 506](#), Fee Schedule for Fire Permit Fees**
- **[Technical Bulletin BLDG-9-1](#), Design and Testing Requirements for Smoke Control Systems**