

The Official Position on Standards & Interpretive Guidance

Reference: OPSIG-2021.01.01

Summary

Clarification and Guidance for Fire Drills:

The Joint Commission (TJC) is issuing interpretive guidance for healthcare organizations regarding fire drills expectations and compliance. This update provides detailed guidance, suggestions and survey points of note.

Relative Standards/EPs & Applicable Manuals

Standard	EP	AHC	BHC	CAH	OME	HAP	LAB	NCC	OBS
EC.02.03.03	1	X	X	X	X	X		X	
EC.02.03.03	2	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
EC.02.03.03	3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
EC.02.03.03	4		X	X	X	X		X	
EC.02.03.03	5	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Frequency of fire drills:

- Healthcare and Ambulatory healthcare occupancies: once per quarter per shift (every 3 months +/- 10 days).
- Business occupancies: once every 12 months from the date of the last drill.
- Drills may be conducted earlier, but this would reset the frequency. For instance, if normally a drill is conducted in March each year, but is conducted in January, then the next year it would be due in January, not March.

Timing of fire drills:

- Drills should be at least over an hour apart and should avoid patterns. For instance, if the drill during first quarter first shift was conducted at 8:30 am, the drills for the first shift for remaining quarters should be before 7:29 am or after 9:31 am, and should not repeat times throughout the year.
- Drills conducted between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am may use an alternative method to notify staff instead of activating audible alarms, such as going door to door to notify staff and/or patients.

Unannounced fire drills:

- Fire drills are expected to be unannounced and held at unexpected times. They should not be scheduled around cases, work load, high traffic times, but should demonstrate randomness.

Who should participate in fire drills:

- Staff, volunteers, licensed independent practitioners, and others who regularly treat patients or work in areas where patients are housed or treated should participate. Refer to your organization's fire response plan; whomever has a role or responsibility during an actual fire according to the plan should also participate in drills.

Leased or rented facilities:

- Drills are only required to be conducted in the spaces occupied by the healthcare organization.
- If possible, participate in the fire drill(s) conducted by or coordinated with the owner.

Documentation expectations:

- Document the date/time of the fire drill.
- Document and evaluate of the drill, including fire safety equipment, fire safety building features, and staff response.
- If items are noted as out of compliance or not working properly, such as strobe not functioning, document corrective actions.

RESOURCES

- The Joint Commission FAQ page, [Fire Drills](#).
- The Joint Commission [Fire Drill Matrix](#).
- The Joint Commission [Take 5: The Environment of Care Fire Drill Matrix Tool](#).