



NYC Buildings Department
280 Broadway, New York, NY 10007

Robert D. LiMandri, Acting Commissioner



BUILDINGS BULLETIN 2008-004

Code Interpretation

Supersedes: None

Issuer: Fatma M. Amer, P.E.
Deputy Commissioner and Chief Code Engineer

Issuance Date: June 26, 2008

Purpose: This document is to clarify the operation of emergency voice/communications systems, including that only live voice announcements by Fire Safety Directors or FDNY are permitted, except as may be provided for in I-1 and I-2 occupancies.

Related Code Section(s): BC 907.2.12.2

Subject(s): Fire protection systems, Fire Alarm, emergency voice/alarm communications systems
High-rise buildings, emergency voice/alarm communications systems

Section BC 907.2.12.2 requires an emergency voice/alarm communication system in high-rise buildings, which shall comply with NFPA 72. As a general rule, if a fire situation occurs in a high-rise building, audible and visible alarms are activated on the fire floor, floor above and floor below and at the Fire Command Center (FCC), and a live voice communication is thereafter made by the Fire Safety Director, or in buildings where the rules of the Fire Department do not require a Fire Safety Director, by the Fire Department when it arrives at the scene. Only the Fire Safety Director and/or Fire Department on the scene is authorized to employ the Fire Command Center in making voice announcements. As stated in Section BC 907.2.12.2, only live announcements are permitted; pre-recorded messaging or automatic broadcasting over the fire alarm speakers is not permitted in New York City.

However, institutional occupancies such as hospitals and assisted living facilities present a different situation in that the evacuation procedure is typically achieved with assistance of staff. Therefore, Section BC 907.2.12.2 includes Exception #1 for high-rise Groups I-1 and I-2 occupancies. This exception permits that the alarm sound in a constantly attended area and that, thereafter, a general occupant notification be broadcast over the overhead page.

In such cases of I-1 and I-2 occupancies, the alert signal at the constantly attended area shall be audible and visual, and the person who is constantly attending the area shall be acceptable to the facility operators as having the training and experience to be responsible for the implementation and direction of an emergency action during this fire alarm situation. In hospitals, patient floors and critical care areas above and below the fire floor shall be permitted to employ visual notification of alarm signals. The overhead page system shall be construed to be an Emergency Voice System for the purpose of compliance with NFPA 72.