BUILDINGS BULLETIN 2008-004
Code Interpretation

Supersedes: None

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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.