

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How long will the testing take to complete? How will the testing impact my ability to get some work done?

The complete testing of fire alarm and sprinkler systems in a building can take from one-half a day up to six days depending upon the size of the building, the number of fire alarm control panels, the number of smoke/heat detectors, the number of sprinkler system test valves, etc.

Building occupants are usually advised that the horns will be tested so that they are aware. Testing the proper functioning of audible devices (i.e., horns, chimes, voice) involves checking the sound intensity of all devices while the devices are in alarm. This may take 30 minutes up through 2 hours or more. It depends on the building size and how far the electrician has to travel between "horns" to see how the next one works.

2. What happens when a fire alarm test is conducted?

A fire alarm test verifies proper operation of the input/output control equipment. Fire alarm detectors are tested or 'smoked' in place to confirm that smoke (aerosol) can enter into the sensing chamber and result in an alarm response. To do this, the electrician uses a long tube that has a funnel at one end; the funnel is placed over the ionization-type detector device and the aerosol is sprayed into the other end. The aerosol sets off the sensor that, in turn, activates the panel. The electrician at the panel makes a note, resets the panel, and then waits for the next trip action. The electricians compare notes when a device is tested to verify that the device tested matches the panel readout. If these do not match, this deficiency needs to be corrected under the maintenance work order system. Sometimes, there are room changes (i.e., divisions) or room number changes that require us to update the electrical systems (notations and labels) with the proper room designations.

3. How many times and for how long will the fire alarm sound? Is each device checked? Do the alarms have to sound during the entire time that the test is conducted?

The horns (and or strobe lights) will be activated just once per building during a building test. These can be turned off for the remainder of the testing required in that building. The purpose of testing of the horns is to verify that all of the horns work and that they sound loud enough as required by code. Some buildings have several horns and each has to be checked and verified while they are sounding during a given test.

After the alarm testing is completed within a building, the sounding of the horn(s) will be 'keyed' out. There is a special key lock for this action. The rest of the testing - smoke sensors, ionization-type sensors, etc. - will resume. When a

system is 'keyed out', it means that the horns will not sound and the strobe lights will not blink, but the electrician at the panel will receive indication that a signal is being sent by the device. In addition to reporting to the panel, this signal must also be verified as being received by the University of Illinois Public Safety Dispatch. The Public Safety Dispatch is responsible for providing the campus with a fire alarm system that has a continuously attended supervising station. If a signal does not get through, then a deficiency will be noted. This deficiency will be placed in a work order for repair after the testing is completed. At the end of each test day, the electricians will re-activate the audible and visual devices in the building.

4. How will I be notified about the upcoming tests in my building?

Two weeks prior to the beginning of a month where testing is scheduled, Safety & Compliance will send a 'First Notification Letter of Fire Protection System Testing,' to Deans, Directors, Department Heads, Business Managers, Facility & Services Building Contacts, and the Public Safety Dispatch. The notification will contain an announcement of the upcoming inspection and will direct the recipients to the Safety & Compliance website for a calendar containing the specific date(s) of all inspections occurring during the next calendar month.

These individuals will be asked to notify their unit/department building occupants of the upcoming test date(s). In addition, one week prior to the test date, Safety & Compliance will contact the Facility & Services Building Contacts and the Public Safety Dispatch with an e-mail entitled, 'Second Notification Letter of Fire Protection Systems Testing.' This notification will again announce the scheduled test(s) and the recipients will be asked to remind their unit/department building occupants of the upcoming test date(s).

On the day of the test, S&C will post signs at all major entries/exits notifying building occupants of the testing.