



School Safety and Security

March 2019

Fire Alarm Changes and Codes

Overview

Fire drills are a universal method of practicing evacuation plans should a fire, or other emergency occur requiring students and staff at schools to quickly exit the building. These drills are required in all educational facilities. Fire alarms are required to be activated manually with a pull station located near exit doors.

School violence events prompted a review of fire alarm system requirements and the following exceptions, limiting access to pull stations, first appeared in the 1997 edition of the Life Safety Code. In some cases, fire alarms were used as a means of relocating building occupants to one location where a violent attack was carried out.

Code Compliance

The following are the exceptions allowed by code to allow one manual pull station to be installed in an educational occupancy.

If no sprinkler system exists:

- Interior corridors must be protected by smoke detectors in accordance with NFPA 101* Life Safety Code.
- Auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasiums must be protected by approved heat detection devices.
- Shops and laboratories involving dusts or vapors must be protected by approved heat detection devices.
- A centrally-located manual pull station must be available to activate the fire alarm.

If a sprinkler system exists:

- A centrally-located manual pull station must be available to activate the fire alarm.

(Additional information on NFPA 101 is available here: <https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=101>)



For more information on the bulletin topic, please contact the MEMA Public Information Officer Susan Faloon at susan.faloon@maine.gov