MEMORANDUM

TO: Memo for Record

THROUGH: Chris Schlaps
Director, Facilities Planning and Development

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DATE: September 9, 2008
October 13, 2015 (Updated)

SUBJECT: Requirements for Adding Fire Alarm Visual Notification (Strobe) Devices for Various UMHHC Renovation Projects

This document is to define guidelines on when and where visible notification devices (strobes), need to be installed in multi-person areas that are not clearly enunciated or mandated in the Codes. Multi-person offices are the most common type of such spaces.

The major point of contention has been what a ‘common space.’ This document is to provide some clarity in strobe requirements for those designing renovations for UMHHC.

This document does not address nor does it alter any clearly defined areas where visual appliances are mandated by the Codes. The Codes being referred to here include NFPA 72 the Fire Alarm Code, NFPA 101 the Life Safety Code, the Michigan Building Code, ADA and UFAS.

These guidelines are intended to apply to all renovation projects. Each project, however, shall be reviewed by the Design Manager and the assigned Electrical Engineer, to affirm the basis of these recommendations is being properly applied to that given project.

The fire alarm system visual notification appliance requirements for renovation projects shall follow the requirements of the Codes noted above, with the following UMHHC modifications and/or clarifications:

I. **General Policy Regarding Need to Add Visual Notification Appliances**

   Fire Alarm visual notification appliances (strobes) are to be installed in all public restrooms, conference rooms, copy rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, break rooms, and any other ‘Public’ or ‘Common’ area clearly defined by the Codes.

   A fire alarm strobe shall also be located in any multi-person office, or other ‘non-common’ area, designed for two or more assigned occupants. In this regard,
‘number of occupants’ shall equal the number of workstations installed. Note that a ‘swing space’ status for a room does not change the ‘number of workstation’ criteria for determining the number of occupants in the area.

The exception to this rule, however, is if any of the assigned staff in the space requests a strobe – even in a single occupant office. When a request is made, either a strobe will be installed if the fire alarm system is capable of supporting it, or some other accommodation will be made for that staff person.

The presence of a visitor chair in an office will not automatically increase the ‘number of occupants’ in the area, beyond the number defined by the ‘number of workstations’ criteria. The assumption is that under normal circumstances the chair(s) is empty.

When the visitor chair is occupied all of the time, however, due to the nature of the area, then that visitor chair will increase the ‘number of occupants.’ An example of such an area is a ‘check-in’ or a ‘check-out’ station.

II. **Projects that are Mainly ‘Furniture, Patch, Paint, and Carpet’**

Typically, the Design Manager on these projects is an interior designer.

If the space before and after the project work is accomplished does not increase the number of workstations, the existing notification appliance set-up shall be ‘grandfathered.’

In cases where the number of occupants in the space was one, and the new number in that given space is two or more, the addition of a strobe will be required.

III. **Architectural Renovation Projects or Change of Usage Projects**

Typically, the design manager on these projects is an architect.

If there are significant architectural changes, the fire alarm design should be carefully reviewed. Significant changes include changes in room function, deletion, addition, and/or reconfiguration of doors, walls, ceilings, and/or changes in the number of workstations. Grandfathering of the existing fire alarm device layouts in these projects, shall not be assumed.

If ‘significant architectural changes’ (as noted immediately above) are not part of the project, then the two ‘rules’ noted above in Paragraph II apply. If ‘significant architectural changes’ are part of the project, then the spaces affected shall be brought up to current standards as outlined in this document.