



California State Fire Marshal Information Bulletin

Issued: September 4, 2008

Fire Alarm Control Unit Replacement in Existing Buildings

When replacing a fire alarm control unit (panel) in an existing building due to obsolescence or the addition of ADA required notification appliances, is the new control unit required to be only code compliant and listed compatible with other existing components such as smoke detectors, heat detectors, etc or is the complete fire alarm and detection system for the entire building required to be made code compliant as for new buildings?

No fire alarm system will sustain itself over the full life expectancy of a building. Eventually the fire alarm control panel or system in that building will need to be replaced. In an existing building, the replacement of fire alarm control unit due to obsolescence, catastrophic failure, voluntary or the addition of ADA required notification appliances is not intended to retroactively require a complete fire alarm system upgrade or compliance with current code requirements not in place at the time when the fire alarm system was originally installed.

The replacement of a fire alarm control unit, necessary to support construction improvements within a portion of a building, shall also not retroactively require a complete fire alarm system upgrade.

Where the existing fire alarm control unit is replaced with a fire alarm control unit of a different manufacturer or utilizing devices of a different technology, the existing initiating devices and conductors may be replaced on a one-for-one basis in the existing locations, provided those devices had been installed in accordance with their listings and location(s) at time of installation, for compatibility with the new fire alarm control unit.

Minor expansion to the fire alarm system such as the addition of circuits or modules to monitor existing supervisory conditions (existing system that utilize a trouble signal only to monitor the supervisory conditions), addition of an initiation device circuit or circuits, (where typically accomplished by installing a zone card in an unused slot, or adding a zone circuit board to the control unit), fire sprinkler control valve monitoring or the installation of a smoke detector at the fire alarm control unit location, etc, shall not retroactively require a complete fire alarm system upgrade.



California State Fire Marshal Information Bulletin

Issued: September 4, 2008

Creating a situation of multiple fire alarm control units should be avoided, however, it is not the intent of the code or standards to prohibit the addition of notification appliance circuit panels (NAC) or power supply extender panels.

The authority having jurisdiction shall be consulted prior to the replacement of any fire alarm control unit or system modification, which shall include complete documentation in accordance with NFPA 72, California Fire Code and local requirements.

For all questions regarding this bulletin, please contact John K. Guhl, Supervising Deputy State Fire Marshal at (916) 445-8314 or by email at john.guhl@fire.ca.gov