

Impairment and restoration of Fire Protection Systems

It is inevitable that situations will arise when fire protection systems, designed to protect property and lives, will require complete or partial isolation.

Automatic sprinkler systems, fire hydrants, gas flooding systems and heat/smoke detection systems are all examples of fire protection equipment that may need to be impaired at some stage. This can be due to upgrades, building works or maintenance. It can be planned, offering time to prepare or it can occur in an emergency, offering little or no advanced warning.

Completing a risk assessment before impairing the function of a fire system can help to address any specific hazards.



Consider these precautions in the event of a fire system impairment:

- ▼ fire brigade notification
- ▼ on-site fire safety officer notification
- ▼ suspension of hazardous activity
- ▼ patrols/fire watch of the area
- ▼ fire hose laid out
- ▼ Other special precautions to be identified and provided

A competent senior employee should be designated to monitor all fire protection system impairments. Responsibilities would include minimising the duration of impairments, implementing risk controls and notifying relevant stakeholders of the intended impairment and subsequent restoration.

A Fire System Impairment and Restoration Notification form may assist during the impairment process. A sample form is available from your Vero representative or by emailing the risk engineering team.

Once fire systems are restored to normal operation relevant parties (including fire brigade, broker and insurer) should be notified. As an example, The Vero Fire System Impairment and Restoration Notification Form includes the date and time of restoration and whether it is full or partial. Notification should also occur if the restoration is delayed (beyond the original time), with an appropriate reason for the delay.

The ideal scenario is that the relevant parties receive an initial impairment notification advising of the commencement date and the intended restoration date, followed up with a completed signed off restoration notification. If this restoration advice is not forthcoming or the duration is delayed, the procedure should be diarised and followed up with a satisfactory resolution.

Hot work during fire system impairments

Preferably all hot work activities (welding, cutting, grinding or other spark generating work) will be eliminated during a fire system impairment. If this isn't practical the need for formal hot work controls is vital. Completion of a hot work permit and relevant controls should then form part of the impairment notification process.

Remember:

If someone forgets to reinstate an impaired fire system after works have been completed and a fire breaks out, the result could be a catastrophic loss, regardless of whether or not attempts are made to immediately restore the system or extinguish the flames.

For more information:

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