



JOHN BEL EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY & CORRECTIONS  
PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL



H. "BUTCH" BROWNING, JR.  
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

## MEMORANDUM 2018-02

TO: Parish School Boards  
Public, Parochial, Private and Charter Schools  
All Educational Facilities  
All Fire Chiefs  
Fire Prevention Bureaus  
Parish and Municipal Building Officials  
OSFM Staff

FROM: H. "Butch" Browning *MB*  
State Fire Marshal

DATE: March 1, 2018

**RE: Fire Alarms and Operations in Educational Occupancies**

In response to the numerous inquiries since the most recent tragedy in Parkland Florida, the OSFM is working diligently to ensure that fire safety and fire prevention remains ready and able to protect lives in an all hazard emergency environment. To diminish fire safety protection in the spirit of addressing an active shooter threat is an ill-advised policy. In the past, fire and explosives have been utilized, causing mass casualties. Most buildings are not designed, nor constructed, in a manner that provides protection to occupants who shelter in place or seek an area of refuge. In fact, fire alarms may be the only active device that can bring about safe evacuation and egress. Many schools use other passive fire suppression allowances so as not to be required to provide automatic fire sprinklers or fire detection devices. The key to any emergency preparedness is to plan and train and the OSFM certainly encourages an approach that includes federal, state and local stakeholders working collaboratively to build site specific preparedness, code compliance and response plans for any building at risk.

I would like to provide clarification and direction as to the State fire code requirements relating to the operation of fire alarm systems within educational occupancies in Louisiana.

1. Fire Alarms – No deactivation, tampering, or modification of fire alarm systems and associated supervised life-safety and egress systems will be allowed. Any fire alarm work, repair or modifications require plan review approval and work performed by OSFM licensed fire alarm contractors. Louisiana law requires strict compliance with the NFPA 72 standard.
2. Fire Drills – One fire drill must be conducted monthly. Special accommodations are allowed where concerns exist for malicious activation of fire alarms. Such methods as scheduling fire drills and sharing it in advance with staff/authorized persons and employing sufficient personnel to monitor the drill similarly to other outdoor events as part of normal school operation are allowed.

3. Enhancements to fire safety and fire protection features in accordance with NFPA 101, Life Safety Code – Upgrading buildings to a more current edition of NFPA 101, Life Safety Code can allow for the use of delayed alarms to include positive alarm sequence, as well as the installation of other active fire suppression systems that allow for the removal of numerous fire pull stations in existing conditions.

As we continue to collect input from across the county and industry and subject matter experts, the OSFM intends to create additional guidance designed to ensure the highest level of prevention, safety and resiliency for all buildings to eliminate death, injury, and property loss. In unison with an all-hazards approach to protecting our children, we stand ready to provide any onsite assistance we can.

**HBB**