



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FIRE MARSHALS

March 5, 2018

Principal Members,

With the most recent tragedy in Parkland Florida, NASFM is again working diligently to ensure that fire safety and prevention remains positioned to protect lives in an all hazard emergency environment. I think we can all agree diminishing fire safety protection, in the spirit of addressing an active shooter threat, is not in the best interest of enhancing holistic school safety. We strongly encourage you to take an active role in working with all concerned parties to ensure our schools are as prepared as possible to the many threats facing them.

In the past, fire and explosives have been utilized in commercial and assembly facilities to cause 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 the needed safe evacuation and egress. We realize many schools use passive fire protection allowances as allowed by the consensus codes in lieu of providing automatic fire sprinklers or fire detection devices. Yet, it's important to remember, the key to any emergency preparedness is to plan and train. NASFM strongly encourages you undertake an approach that includes stakeholders working collaboratively to build site specific preparedness, code compliance, and response plans for your communities.

At the same time, we would like to make some specific recommendations to each State Fire Marshal as it relates to the operation of fire alarm systems.

1. Fire Alarms – We discourage any deactivation, tampering, or modification of fire alarm systems and associated supervised life-safety and egress systems. Further we recommend strict compliance with the NFPA 72 standard.
2. Fire Drills – Fire drills should be conducted as recommended by the consensus codes with frequency thresholds maintained. Special accommodations may be allowed where concerns exist for malicious activation of fire alarms. We recommend methods such as scheduling fire drills and sharing it in advance with staff/authorized persons. Employing sufficient personnel to monitor the drill, similarly to other outdoor events as part of normal school operation, is also recommended.
3. Enhancements to fire safety and fire protection features in accordance with nationally recognized consensus codes – Upgrading buildings to a more current edition of the consensus codes can allow for the use of delayed alarms to include positive alarm sequence. The installation of other active fire suppression systems can also allow for the removal of numerous fire pull stations in existing conditions.

We'd like to remind you, NASFM created guidance several years ago involving school security and doors. Attached you will find this guidance which is also available at www.firemarshals.org. This guidance document has been referenced and used many times as an effective and reasonable approach to securing doors in our schools. We encourage you to use it in your interactions to ensure fire safety is not compromised unnecessarily.

As we continue to collect input from across the country and from industry, as well as subject matter experts, NASFM 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 from all threats.

On behalf of the NASFM and the Board of Directors,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Butch Browning', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

H. Butch Browning
President
National Association of State Fire Marshals