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5 Things You Need to Know About the 2019 Edition of NFPA 72

The 2019 edition of NFPA 72 is here. Are you ready for it?

It's been three years since the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) published the most recent edition of the wide-ranging standard that spans "the application, installation, location, performance, inspection, testing, and maintenance of fire alarm systems, fire warning equipment and emergency warning equipment, and their components."

Since then, thousands of volunteers have contributed ideas and recommendations, the technical committee has debated the changes, and the final text has been proposed. A vote was held in June of 2018 and the 2019 edition was officially published in September 2018.

Whether you're an architect, engineer, contractor, or building owner/manager, NFPA 72 matters. It will have an impact on how you design, test, install, and maintain life safety systems in the future.

The 2019 update is a significant one; there are nearly 200 changes in the document, ranging from minor edits of terminology to major new processes.

So even if your jurisdiction will not immediately adopt the 2019 edition of NFPA 72, it's important to know what's on the way.

It will enable you to plan for the future and gain insight into how technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) are changing life safety and building systems.

Here are five things you need to know about the 2019 edition of NFPA 72:

1 Major changes are coming to carbon monoxide detection.

Formerly, carbon monoxide detection was covered by a separate standard, NFPA 720. This became an issue because NFPA 720 and NFPA 72 were not in sync with each other, causing unnecessary complication. Now, as of 2019, all carbon monoxide information is being incorporated into NFPA 72. This means that, when a local building code mandates carbon monoxide detection in a facility, your best bet is to turn to NFPA 72 for direction on how best to comply. NFPA 72 will give you explicit direction on the number and location of carbon monoxide detectors to satisfy the code requirements and design an optimal system. My recommendation is that you begin familiarizing yourself with these specifications so you can start to work them into your designs.

2 There are new maximum and minimum mounting heights for fire alarm control units.

It may seem odd that these specifications have never been part of NFPA 72, but now they are. Control units now will need to be installed between 1.5 feet and 5.5 feet above the finished floor. This may affect how you design and engineer systems.

Rather than waiting, I'd suggest you begin making these specs part of your designs – even if your jurisdiction is an edition or two behind the 2019 version.

3 Elevator recall and evacuation operations are getting specific.

As buildings become smarter, they create new opportunities to use elevators for evacuation in emergencies. The NFPA 72 term for them is Occupant Evacuation Elevators (OEE). The standard now provides full codification of requirements and procedures on everything from how to shut down elevators and signage requirements, to hardening and smoke detector requirements for OEEs.

The availability of OEEs represents a major step forward in your ability to support safe evacuations. As you design and engineer new buildings, start thinking about how best to implement OEEs to help save more lives.

4 Class N pathways continue to make progress.

The 2016 edition of NFPA 72 created a new circuit designation called Class N pathways. These pathways permit the use of non-life safety networks and Ethernet when interconnecting life safety systems. Class N pathways opened up a whole new world of opportunity and flexibility for professionals who design and build fire alarm systems. Now, with the 2019 edition of NFPA 72, more guidance is being provided on how life safety and other building systems can share pathways.

This represents an important advance in smart building technology and the integration of building and life safety systems. As IoT expands into life safety, the pace of change is accelerating.

You will need to develop expertise on how best to take advantage of the opportunities it presents, so it's smart to stay on top of these developments.

5 You are key to the process.

The NFPA has made the process of updating NFPA 72 rigorous, open, and inclusive – and the organization values your opinion. Don't sit on the sidelines. Your knowledge, input, and feedback will help ensure that life safety standards continue to improve in a way that makes sense for everyone.

Where do you begin? If you're new to NFPA 72, read Chapter 1 and the Origin and Development section to better understand what it's all about. It will give you a good perspective on how this essential standard has evolved. If you're already familiar with NFPA 72 and want to catch up, read the redline version of [NFPA 72](#). It highlights all the changes, so you can quickly see what's new.

Finally, take advantage of resources provided by Johnson Controls. We offer "Learn from the Leader" webinars and "Lunch and Learn" sessions, and we conduct a roadshow that brings our experts directly into American cities on a regular basis.

Because Johnson Controls is actively and closely involved in the NFPA 72 process, you can be confident that we are always looking ahead, using NFPA 72 to guide our product development plans, support compliance, and make your job easier.

The more you know, the better you'll understand NFPA 72 and the better your designs will be.

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