

Loss Prevention Standards

Impairment Management

Introduction

Fire protection systems are a key element of a businesses' protection measures to reduce property damage and interruption to business in the event of fire, and it is vital that the effectiveness and continuity of such fire protection systems is maintained.

Shutting fire protection systems off without first taking proper precautions, or leaving such systems impaired longer than necessary has been a significant factor in a number of serious losses and in most cases such losses could have been mitigated by properly managing the impairment.

Accordingly, it is necessary to make sure that all appropriate measures are taken to ensure that any potential impairment downtime is kept to an absolute minimum and dealt with promptly. The introduction of a formal impairment policy is the most effective way of managing and mitigating this risk.

Failure to notify your Insurer of an impairment in a timely manner may invalidate your insurance policy.

This guidance document outlines the basic considerations needed to develop an effective impairment management policy.

Notification of Impairments

It is often a requirement to notify Aviva of an impairment prior to the system being rendered inoperative. However, where the impairment is planned and provided that it will not exceed 8 hours, and will be carried out during normal working hours, then it will be acceptable to forgo the need for notification. In a situation where the impairment is an emergency or continuous over an extended period, notification should be made immediately. The Aviva GCS Impairment Notification form should be completed and sent to impairmentmanagement@aviva.com

A competent person should be assigned and made accountable for notifying and controlling the impairment, and to see that all the laid down precautions and procedures are being complied with, correctly authorised and effectively managed during the impairment period.

Types of Impairment

An impairment of a system is where any action results in any part of a protection system being inoperative or a condition in where a protection system cannot perform its designed safety function.

There are two impairment types:

Planned Impairment

A programmed impairment in order to carry out routine maintenance or modifications to the system.

Emergency Impairment

An unplanned isolation, for example due to:

- Having to replace sprinkler heads following a fire event
- Failure of a component such as a fire pump
- Failure of a water main
- Failure of a fire alarm system
- Frost damage
- Pipe leakage
- Accidental damage



Systems Requiring Notification

- Fixed protection water supplies
- Manual firefighting water supplies
- Sprinkler systems
- Gas flooding systems
- Water spray systems
- Water mist systems
- Private and/or public fire hydrants
- Any other fire suppression system
- Automatic fire detection and alarm systems

Precautions

- Prior notice must be given to Aviva (see Notification of Impairments above) before any system is wholly or partially isolated, drained or decommissioned
- Impairing multiple fire protection systems at the same time can result in unnecessarily large exposure and should be avoided
- Fire risk assessments should be completed and reviewed to take account of the proposed impairment and the implications it presents. This should include the health and safety of staff, visitors and the public
- Wherever possible minimise the duration of the impairment by initially preparing the work area in advance, and where feasible work continuously until the work is complete
- A fire-watch at regular intervals should be conducted in the affected areas to ascertain that there are no indications of fire. Give particular consideration to a 24-hour presence/patrol regime for the duration of the impairment.
 - This philosophy should be extended to other perils, e.g. water leakage, hazardous materials; etc.
- Serious consideration should be given to notifying the Fire & Rescue Service of the intention to render the protection inoperative and solicit their participation as needed
- All necessary precautionary measures should be implemented prior to any shutdown of the protection, e.g. Management/Supervisory staff, tenants, contractors and visitors informed; no smoking policy enforced; fire doors closed; implementation of frequent inspection patrols of the affected areas to ensure continued safe practices are employed, e.g. fire doors remain closed, safe storage, safe waste arrangements, no illicit smoking
- If practical, consider the provision of introducing temporary fire protection/detection systems
- Additional portable fire extinguishing appliances should be placed on special readiness so that in case of fire, the best possible use of them may be made. A sufficient number of trained personnel must always be available to handle the appliances at all times
- Where possible, impairments should be carried out during normal working hours (daytime working) with the least possible interruption to the protection (but see below for hazardous processes, manufacturing premises)
- Where the closure of any part of an automatic system would deny protection to hazardous process areas or plant items, special precautions should be implemented. Where practicable, hazardous processes should be suspended for the duration of the installation impairment, or alternatively the impairment deferred until idle hours
- Hot Works should be suspended or not carried out until all fire protection systems are fully operative again. In-situ welding of pipework is to be avoided. Where such work is unavoidable a 'Hot Work Permit' system must be enforced
- To reduce the number of Fire & Rescue Service responses to false alarms, it may be the case where there is an automatic fire alarm signalling to an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC), that a confirmed activation is necessary before the ARC are permitted to notify the Fire & Rescue Service of an alarm condition. This requires at least two detectors to operate, or a follow-up confirmatory telephone call of a fire situation. In such circumstances, agreement with all parties should be sought to permit the ARC to notify the Fire & Rescue Service of an alarm condition immediately following first receipt, in order to minimise any delay in their response during the period of impairment. It is also important to confirm to the ARC and/or Fire & Rescue Service whether or not the premises is occupied 24/7 and how 'out-of-hours' signals will be addressed on the basis that there may not be a confirmation call from a member of staff
- In so far as is practicable, all extensions or alterations to automatic protection systems should be conducted in such a manner as to render the protection inoperative for the least possible period



- To this end all extensions or alterations to pipework should, where possible, be installed and satisfactorily tested, prior to the final connection to the existing protection. Where extensive alterations are required, as much of the protection as practicable must remain operative during progress of the work
- Consider whether any revision needs to be made to Business Continuity Plans to take account of the period of impairment

In the case of multi-storey premises, additional considerations are:

- Impairments of different floor levels should be planned so as to have no two adjacent floors impaired at the same time
- Where there is no automatic fire alarm, consider its temporary provision or a 24-hour fire watch (one person per 2 floors)
 - Consider this for other perils
- There should be no storage of combustible materials on any floor where sprinklers are isolated
- Protection to be maintained in all site offices, stores, welfare areas, etc.
- Where provided, protection to atriums to be maintained
- All riser compartments, fire doors and shutters should be closed and preferably locked at the end of each working day

Reinstatement

Ensure the system(s) have been reset and are back in full working order. All remote signals, whether local or off-site must be reinstated. Inform Aviva GCS that any notified impairment has been completed using the Aviva GCS Impairment Notification form, by completing the Reinstatement section and sending to impairmentmanagement@aviva.com

Advise staff that the system is back in working order. It may also be necessary to advise the following parties with whom you may have consulted/notified prior to or during the impairment period:

- Alarm Receiving Centre
- Fire & Rescue Services
- Facilities and buildings management personnel
- Security guards and gatehouse personnel

Specialist Fire and Security Protection System Installers

Unless specialist knowledge and competency is available within an organisation, all work involving fire and security protection systems should only be carried out by a specialist service provider.

All fire protection products and systems shall be designed, installed, commissioned, and maintained, etc. by a company with accreditation by an independent, UKAS accredited third party certification body such as the Loss Prevention Certification Board*.

NB. Sprinkler systems should be designed, installed, commissioned, maintained and/or modified by an LPS 1048 Certificated Sprinkler Installer *, or by prior agreement with Aviva plc.

* See [RedBookLive](#)

Further risk management information can be obtained from [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#)

Please Note

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