

San Francisco



Fire Department

Division of Fire Prevention and Investigation
698 2nd Street, Room 109, San Francisco, CA 94107

Fire Alarm Sleeping Area Upgrade FAQ

- 1. Audible appliances are already installed in each of the sleeping areas/bedrooms of my building. What do I do now?**

Per the 2022 AB # 3.08 Section 1.A Option # 1 (which is published on the SFFD Website in the following link: <https://sf-fire.org/files/2022-11/3.08%20Sleeping%20Area%20Fire%20Alarm%20Requirements%202022.pdf>)

Provide a copy of the previously approved and issued fire alarm plans. The plans shall be stamped by a SFFD Plan Check Inspector and has a “Complete” status in the DBI Permit Tracking System (PTS). The fire alarm plans shall include Cover Sheet, Equipment List, Sequence of Operation Matrix, Floor Plans with devices and appliances layout, Riser Diagram, and Battery & Voltage drop calculations. The floor plans must specifically show audible appliances in each sleeping area/bedroom (living rooms, dens, etc. are not required to show audible appliances). Provide proof of a completed Fire Inspection associated with the DBI permit, such as a final signed off DBI job card.

In addition to the required information above, provide a wet-signed statement on a letter/document signed by the owner indicating the following:

“The existing FA system installed at my building located on **(Building address)** was permitted under Permit Application **(DBI PA #)** and was accepted after a Fire Inspection dated

(Date/record of Inspection) is operational and maintained as it was installed.

Indicate on the letter/document the Fire Alarm Service Company Name, Contact information and License number.) That there were no changes made to the FA system after it was installed and accepted by SFFD”.

All the above information, once submitted to the SFFD shall be sufficient to consider the existing fire alarm system to be in compliance with the minimum audibility requirements of 2022 SFFC Section 1103.7.6.1 and this Administrative Bulletin. A system upgrade of the existing High-Frequency audible appliance to Low-Frequency audibility shall not be required. Additional audible appliances shall not be required to be added in living areas/dens, etc. and an audibility test by a C-10 Contractor shall not be required.

2. My new (complete) fire alarm system was installed on or after January 1, 2017. Do I still need to upgrade to comply?

NO. Any fire alarm system installed on or after January 1, 2017 is already in compliance.

3. I am no longer the building owner? What do I do now?

Send a letter to the address below stating the building was sold along with the date sold and the name(s) and address(es) of the new owners.

San Francisco Fire Department
Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation
698 Second Street, Room 109
San Francisco, CA 94107
Attn: F/A Compliance Coordinator

4. My building does not have a fire alarm system. What do I do now?

Submit a completed *No Fire Alarm Letter* to the address below:

San Francisco Fire Department
Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation
698 Second Street, Room 109
San Francisco, CA 94107
Attn: F/A Compliance Coordinator

A sample letter can be found at

<https://sf-fire.org/statement-compliance-form-building-owners>.

5. My fire alarm system has already been upgraded. What do I do now?

Submit copies of the approved DBI job card for the fire alarm work and the most recent *Statement of Compliance Form* to the address below:

San Francisco Fire Department
Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation
698 Second Street, Room 109
San Francisco, CA 94107
Attn: F/A Compliance Coordinator

A sample form can be found at

<https://sf-fire.org/statement-compliance-form-building-owners>.

6. My fire alarm system was tested for compliance and does not need to be upgraded. What do I do now?

Submit copies of the approved DBI job card for the fire alarm work exemption and the most recent *Statement of Compliance Form* to the address below:

San Francisco Fire Department
Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation
698 Second Street, Room 109
San Francisco, CA 94107
Attn: F/A Compliance Coordinator

A sample form can be found at
<https://sf-fire.org/statement-compliance-form-building-owners>.

7. Who needs to comply with this requirement?

All existing (R-2) residential buildings (3 units or more) with an existing building fire alarm system.

8. My building is a mixed use of business and residential, do I still need to comply?

YES, for the residential portion of the building, but only if it has an existing building fire alarm system.

9. When do I need to comply by?

Before July 1, 2023, or the completion of work having a building permit with a cost value of \$99,000 in construction (Except for seismic upgrade).

1103.7.6.1. Sleeping Area Requirements.

For all buildings that are required to have a fire alarm system under this Code Section 1103.7.6, pertaining to Group R-2 occupancies, the Building Code, the Housing Code, or any other law, the building owner shall upgrade the fire alarm system, if necessary, to comply with the sound level requirement for sleeping areas set forth in Section 18.4.5.1 of NFPA 72 (2013 edition), as amended from time to time, upon either (a) completion of work under a building permit with a cost of construction of \$99,000 or more, (b) July 1, 2023, whichever occurs first.

Exceptions. *Division 1103.7.6.1(a) shall not apply to mandatory seismic strengthening alterations being performed pursuant to [Chapter 5E](#) of the Existing Building Code. This subsection 1103.7.6.1 applies only to Group R-2 occupancies.*

(Am. Ord. [77-21](#), File No. 210259, App. 5/28/2021, Eff. 6/28/2021)

10. If the building does not have a building FA system (with audible and visual notification), but does have a dedicated function fire alarm system that only monitors water-flow and supervisory of sprinkler system needs to comply? – (A Sprinkler Monitoring System is **NOT** a building fire alarm system)

NO

11. What do I need to do to comply?

Comply with **SFFD Administrative Bulletin # 3.08-2019**

<https://sf-fire.org/308-sleeping-area-fire-alarm-requirements>

for the specific applicable requirements for your building and the existing fire alarm system.

Ensure audible devices (speaker or horns) have a sound level at the **PILLOW** in each of the sleeping areas (including the living space of each dwelling unit per **SFFD Administrative Bulletin #2.01-2019**) that meets the most restrictive of one of the following:

- a. 15 dBA above ambient sound
- b. 5 dBA above the maximum sound level for 60 seconds
- c. Sound level of at least 75 dBA

2013 NFPA 72 Section 18.4.5.1

*Where audible appliances are installed to provide signals for sleeping areas, they shall have a sound level of at least 15 dB above the average ambient sound level or 5 dB above the maximum sound level having a duration of at least 60 seconds **or a sound level of at least 75 dBA, whichever is greater**, measured at the pillow level in the area required to be served by the system using the A-weighted scale (dBA).*

12. How is the sound test conducted?

The sound must be measured using a calibrated and approved dBA meter.

To demonstrate and memorialize compliance with the requirement, the following steps shall be taken: A) An audibility test shall be performed by a licensed C-10 contractor. B) The test results shall be documented in a report, on company letterhead, indicating the date the test was performed and statement confirming the test was conducted using a calibrated and approved dBA meter. Included in this report shall be data for each dwelling unit, indicating the dBA readings in each living area and sleeping area of at least 75dBA. This report shall then be placed on 11" x 17" single sided sheets (2 sets required when submitted).

13. What happens if there is a door (barrier) between the pillow and the audio device?

The sound test must be conducted with the door closed (barrier in place).

2013 NFPA 72 Section 18.4.5.2

If any barrier such as a door, curtain, or retractable partition is located between the notification appliance and the pillow, the sound pressure level shall be measured with the barrier placed between the appliance and the pillow.

14. Who can conduct the sound test for me?

A licensed C-10 contractor. Your fire alarm company or any fire alarm company/contractor with a valid CA C-10 license.

15. Do I need to upgrade to low frequency audible devices for my existing fire alarm system that already meets the audibility requirement?

NO

If the existing fire alarm system has existing audible appliances that achieve the sound pressure level requirements of NFPA 72-2013 they shall be acceptable even if they do not produce Low-Frequency tones.

16. What do I do with the sound test results?

To demonstrate and memorialize compliance with the requirement:

- a. An audibility test shall be performed by a licensed C-10 contractor.
- b. The test results shall be documented in a report, on company letterhead, indicating the date the test was performed and statement confirming the test was conducted using a calibrated and approved dBA meter
- c. The report shall include the data for each dwelling unit, indicating the dBA readings in each living area and sleeping area of at least 75 dBA.
- d. The report shall be placed on 11' x 17" single sided sheets and submitted to the SFFD at DBI (2 sets required).

17. Where do I submit the sound test report?

Obtain a "\$1.00 Fire Only" permit and submit two (2) sets of the report at the address below. The scope of work for the Fire Only permit is *"To verify existing sound levels in sleeping area, complying with SFFC Section 1103.7.6.1"*.

San Francisco Fire Department
Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation
49 South Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94103

Upon issuance of the permit, a random sampling inspection shall be witnessed by the District Fire Inspector to verify the sounds level indicated on the test report.

18. I have obtained my "Fire Only" permit. What do I do now?

Call your District Inspector at 415-554-8927 to schedule a random sampling inspection.

The C-10 contractor that conducted the dBA measurements for the report shall be in attendance with a calibrated and approved dBA meter.

No electrical inspection required.

19. Can I use wireless fire alarm system equipment?

Yes, wireless fire alarm system equipment shall be permitted per SFFD 2019 Administrative Bulletin 2.01 specific requirements.

<https://sf-fire.org/201-fire-alarm-submittal>

When new audible appliances are required to meet the minimum 75dBA sound level, they shall be current CSFM listed as Low-Frequency audible appliances.

20. My existing FACU is being replaced with a new FACU? What do I do now?

See SFFD Administrative Bulletin 3.08, Section 5.

<https://sf-fire.org/308-sleeping-area-fire-alarm-requirements>

21. What is the average cost of the upgrade?

There are too many variables based on the number of building units, equipment brand, required number of devices needed, and whether the system is hard wired or wireless. SFFD recommends getting several quotes from licensed vendors.

22. I still have a lot of questions. What do I do now?

The building owner or DBI permit applicant may request to have a Pre-Application meeting with the SFFD by submitting a pre-application meeting request for.

<https://sf-fire.org/services/plan-check#pre-ap>