



NABH/GEN/2024/2365

March 27, 2024

Fire Safety Advisory for Healthcare Organizations (HCOs)

Dear Healthcare Organizations (HCOs),

Fire safety is a paramount concern for all healthcare facilities, ensuring the safety of patients, staff, and visitors alike. Recognizing this critical aspect, the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) underscores the importance of stringent fire safety measures within healthcare premises.

NABH, being National Accreditation body for healthcare organizations in India, mandates compliance with rigorous fire safety standards to mitigate risks and uphold the highest standards of patient care and staff safety. Adherence to these standards not only safeguards lives but also contributes to maintaining operational continuity and preserving essential healthcare services.

The Ministry of Health, Government of India, has issued an advisory emphasizing the imperative for HCOs to prioritize fire safety measures. It is incumbent upon all healthcare establishments to take due cognizance of this directive and implement comprehensive fire safety protocols without delay. **We are enclosing aforesaid advisory vide notification no. HFW/Advisory to prevent hospital fires/23rdMarch2024/1, dated 23 March 2024, appended as Annexure 1, for the reference of all our health care partners.**

In light of this, all HCOs are reminded to:

1. Conduct regular fire risk assessments and audits to identify vulnerabilities and ensure compliance with fire safety regulations.
2. Implement robust fire prevention measures, including proper storage of flammable materials, maintenance of electrical systems, and installation of fire detection and suppression systems.
3. Provide regular training to staff members on fire evacuation procedures, including the safe evacuation of patients with special needs.
4. Establish clear communication channels and emergency response protocols to coordinate effectively in the event of a fire or other emergencies.
5. Periodically review and update fire safety policies and procedures to address emerging risks and incorporate best practices.

Failure to prioritize fire safety not only jeopardizes lives but also poses legal and reputational risks to healthcare organizations. NABH urges all HCOs to demonstrate unwavering commitment to fire safety and incorporate it as an integral component of their quality assurance framework.

For further guidance and support on implementing fire safety measures, HCOs are encouraged to refer to **NABH's Advisory for Minimum Essential Fire Safety Measures** available on our website, enclosed as **Annexure 2**. These guidelines are meant to ensure patient safety and in no way absolves the organization of fulfilling its statutory obligations with regard to fire safety.

<https://nabh.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Revised-Advisory-for-Minimum-Essential-Fire-Safety-Measures-20.09.2022.pdf>

Let us collectively uphold the highest standards of safety and quality in healthcare delivery.

Thanking you,

Sincerely yours,

(Dr. Atul Mohan Kochhar)
CEO-NABH

Documents Enclosed:

Annexure 1: Advisory to prevent hospital fires from Ministry of Health, Government of India

Annexure 2: NABH's Advisory for Minimum Essential Fire Safety Measure



PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

As temperatures escalate, Union Health Ministry and NDMA Issue Joint-Advisory to States on measures to prevent Hospital Fires during Summer months

States/UTs directed to ensure all accredited hospitals within their jurisdiction conduct thorough inspections, address discrepancy in electrical load capacity and obtain valid fire NOCs from respective state fire departments

States/UTs also urged to conduct follow-up reviews to ensure implementation of critical safety measures

New Delhi, 23 March 2024

As temperatures escalate during the summer months, hospital fires become a significant threat. To prevent this, the Union Health Ministry and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) have issued a joint advisory to all States/UTs underscoring the paramount importance of proactive measures in preventing such devastating incidents.

State Health Departments and State Disaster Management Authorities have been directed to work in close collaboration to ensure that all accredited hospitals within their jurisdiction take immediate action on the following:

- **Thorough Inspections:** Conduct comprehensive fire safety audit / on-site inspections of all hospitals to assess fire safety compliance. Ensure that fire-fighting systems, including fire alarms, fire smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, fire hydrants, and fire lifts, are present and fully functional.
- **Electrical Load Audits:** Address the critical issue of insufficient electrical load capacity. Hospitals must regularly conduct electrical load audits, particularly when adding new equipment or converting spaces into ICUs. Any identified discrepancies must be promptly rectified.
- **Fire NOC Compliance:** Hospitals must strictly adhere to regulatory requirements and obtain valid fire No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) from their respective state fire departments. Prioritize re-calibration of electrical loads in older buildings constructed before adopting fire safety norms.

A detailed set of instructions outlining the steps and measures to be undertaken by hospitals to ensure fire safety compliance have also been provided to Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs, recommending them to disseminate the information among all accredited hospitals.

Following are the instructions that need to be carried out to prevent occurrences of fire incidents in hospitals and other healthcare facilities:

1. **Functional Fire-Fighting Systems:** Hospitals must regularly inspect fire- fighting equipment such as fire extinguishers, hydrants, and alarms. This includes checking the expiry dates of extinguishers, ensuring hydrants are accessible and have adequate water pressure, and that fire alarms are operational and audible throughout the facility.
2. **Regular Maintenance and Testing:** Establish a maintenance schedule for all fire safety equipment. This should include monthly checks of fire extinguishers, quarterly tests of fire alarms and hydrants, and annual professional inspections to certify their effectiveness in accordance with relevant Indian Standards.
3. **Regular Electrical Load Audits:** Conduct electrical audits bi-annually to evaluate the hospital's power consumption, particularly in high-demand areas like ICUs. Upgrades or modifications should be assessed by a certified electrician to ensure they meet safety standards without overloading the system as per the National Electrical Code of India-2023.
4. **Oxygen Safety:** In areas with oxygen tanks or piped oxygen, implement strict no-smoking policies and controls on heat sources. Signage should clearly mark these areas, and staff should be trained on the risks associated with high- oxygen environments.
5. **Installation of Smoke Detectors and Fire Alarms:** Ensure fire smoke detectors and fire alarms are installed in all hospital areas, particularly in patient rooms, hallways, and common areas. Test these systems monthly as stipulated in IS2189 and replace batteries annually or as needed.
6. **Combustible Material Control:** Audit materials used in hospital construction and furnishings to identify and replace combustible materials with non-combustible or fire-resistant alternatives, especially in-patient care areas.
7. **Non-Combustible Material for Electrical Ducts:** Inspect electrical ducts to ensure they are sealed with materials like intumescent firestop sealants that prevent the spread of fire and smoke through openings.
8. **Avoid Overloading Power Sources:** Use power management systems to monitor electrical loads and prevent overloading. Ensure that multiple high- power devices are not connected to a single circuit. Regularly review power distribution to accommodate new equipment safely.
9. **Installation of Water Sprinklers and Hosepipes:** Fit critical areas, including ICUs and operation theatres, with automatic sprinkler systems and accessible hosepipes. These systems should be linked in sync with the fire alarm system to be activated in the event of a fire.
10. **Strict Adherence to the National Building Code:** Regularly review and update hospital infrastructure to comply with the latest fire safety standards outlined in the National Building Code 2016. This includes ensuring proper ventilation systems, fire-resistant doors, and emergency lighting in corridors and stairwells.
11. **Obtaining Fire Safety NOC:** Annually Renew the Fire Safety No-Objection Certificate as per State Fire Safety Rules from the local fire department. This includes submitting up-to-date fire safety plans and records of equipment maintenance and staff training.

12. **Staff Training and Drills:** Implement a continuous training program for all staff on fire prevention, emergency procedures, and the use of fire-fighting equipment. Conduct bi-annual fire drills, including evacuation drills, to ensure staff, doctors, and patients know how to respond in an emergency.
13. **Evacuation Plans:** Develop comprehensive evacuation plans that include clear, well-marked escape routes, emergency exits free of obstructions, and designated safe assembly areas. Plans should be displayed prominently throughout the hospital and in staff training programs. Each hospital has to formulate an SoP to be followed in case of a fire incident.

States/UTs have also been urged to conduct follow-up reviews to ensure the implementation of these critical safety measures.

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HFW/Advisory to prevent hospital fires/23rdMarch2024/1

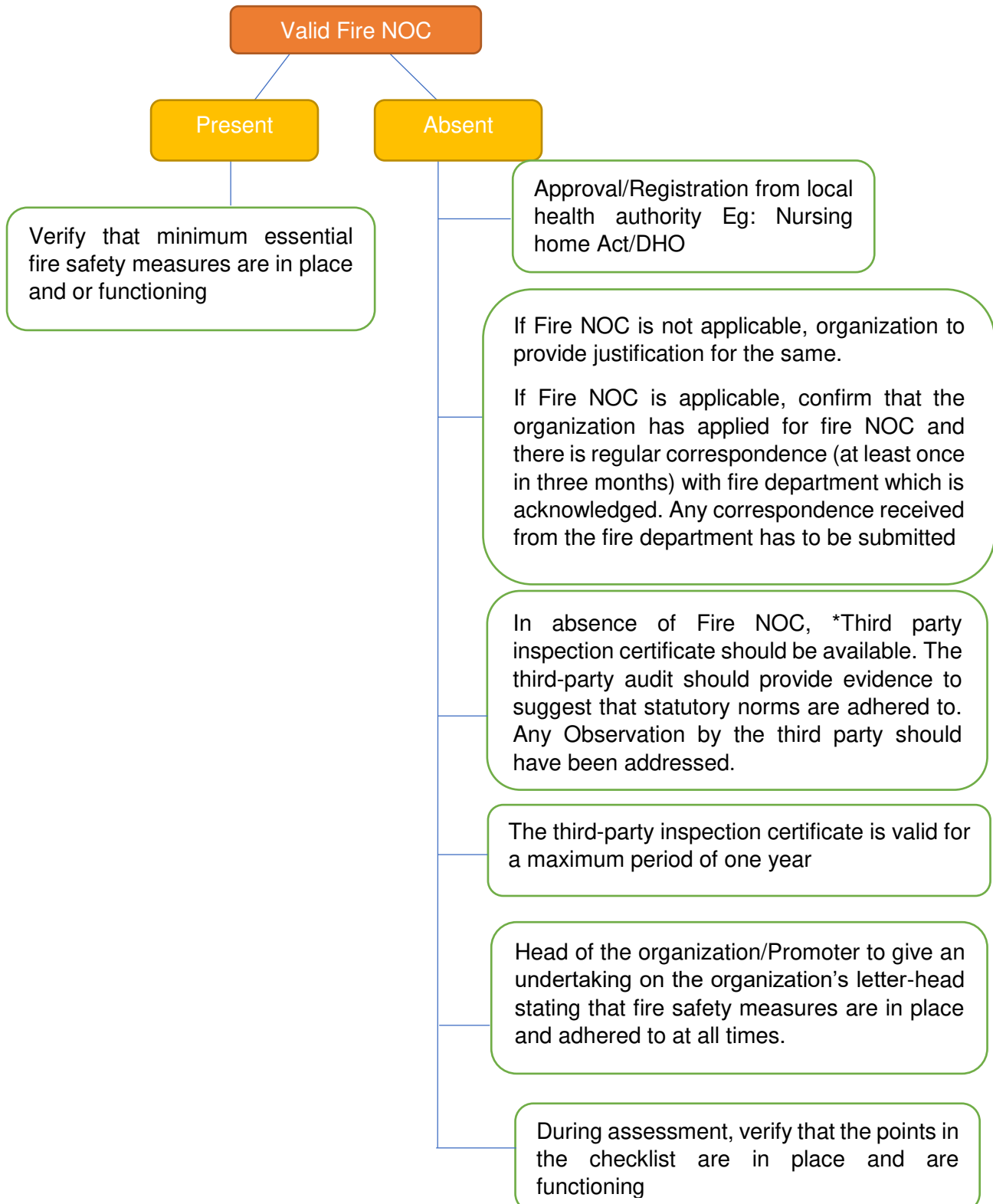


NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD FOR HOSPITALS AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Advisory for Minimum Essential Fire Safety Measures

Applicable to Healthcare Units under all schemes of Certification and Accreditation

These guidelines are meant to ensure patient safety and in no way absolves the organization of fulfilling its statutory obligations with regard to fire safety.





NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD FOR HOSPITALS AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

*NABH prescribes that Fire & Life Safety Inspection Certificates under NABCB accreditation issued by NABCB accredited Type 'A' Inspection Bodies for Fire & Life Safety Inspections of hospitals/health care providers shall be in accordance with the following:

- a. National Building Code of India
- b. Model Bill to provide for the maintenance of Fire and Emergency service for the state (2019)
- c. Respective State Fire Safety Rules
- d. NABH accreditation requirements for fire safety and applicable statutes
- e. Any other applicable statutes.

Such Fire & Life Safety Inspection Certificates shall be accepted in lieu of statutory Fire NOC, **only for consideration for the purpose of NABH accreditation**. This does not absolve the hospitals/health care providers from complying to Fire NOC requirements/any other extant applicable statutes. It shall be sole responsibility of hospitals/health care providers to obtain Fire NOC, as applicable.

NABCB accredited Inspection Bodies shall be required to issue a final Fire & Life Safety Inspection certificate under NABCB accreditation bearing NABCB Accreditation Mark after the inspection is carried out and satisfactory corrective action and resolution of non-conformities, if any.

NABH accreditation requirements for Fire & Life Safety : (in addition to above)

1. Firefighting equipment like wet riser, hydrants, auto sprinkler, fire alarm system, fire extinguishers of all types and sizes should be available as per table below (adapted from NBC 2016).
2. Operational and maintenance plan for firefighting equipment including refilling of extinguishers.
3. Up to date fire drawings to be available. Where applicable, the fire drawings should also specify the location of fire dampers.
4. Fire detection and smoke detectors exist across all floors. The detectors shall be tested for functionality at regular intervals, and records maintained.
5. Central fire alarm system is installed at a location which is staffed 24/7.
6. Fire exit plan for each floor. Exit door should be openable and free from any materials which will obstruct way.
7. Fire Exit signage on all floors well illuminated/ self-glowing, as per NBC guidelines.
8. Emergency illumination system in case power goes.
9. Designated place for assembly of patients and staff in case of fire.
10. Mock fire drill records and schedule of conduct of drills.



NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD FOR HOSPITALS AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Minimum Requirements for Fire Fighting Installations

Type of Hospital	Wet Riser	Automatic Sprinkler	Manually operated electric fire alarm	Auto detection and fire alarm system
Hospitals less than 15 meters in height, with plot area upto 1000 square metres and upto G + 1 floor	NR	R	R	NR
Hospitals less than 15 meters in height, with plot area upto 1000 square metres and G + 2 floors	R	R	R	R
Hospitals less than 15 meters in height with plot area more 1000 square metres	R	R	R	R
Hospitals 15 meters and above but not exceeding 24 meters in height	R	R	R	R
Hospitals above 24 meters but not exceeding 45 meters in height	R	R	R	R
<p style="text-align: center;">R = Required NR = Required Sufficient water storage (underground and/or terrace) should be provided to ensure fire-fighting</p>				

Dated 20th September 2022