

From CMS

Life Safety Update: Generator Remote Annunciator Panel Requirements

This is intended to clear up the confusion regarding the requirements for remote annunciator panels for emergency generators.

CMS has been made aware of a prevailing thought that this is a “new” requirement that CMS has only recently begun to enforce. A remote annunciator panel for a generator has been a requirement since the 1965 Edition of NFPA 76, Essential Electrical Systems for Hospitals. CMS has also been made aware of a couple of common misconceptions regarding the applicability of this and subsequent standards. The first misconception is that this standard did not apply to generators in nursing homes because the title of the standard says hospitals. The second misconception is that this standard could not be used to govern generators, because older editions of the Life Safety Code only required generators in hospitals and nursing homes utilizing life support equipment.

The fact of the matter is that NFPA 76, 76A, 99, or 110 are the correct standards, depending upon the year of installation, to use in determining compliance for a required generator regardless of whether it’s installed in a hospital or a nursing home. As was previously stated, generators are required in hospitals and nursing homes utilizing life support equipment. In addition, if a generator is used as a backup power source for other LSC required systems or equipment, such as emergency lighting, exit lights, fire alarm system, etc., then the generator is considered to be a required generator. That required generator is then governed the same as if it were installed in a hospital or used in conjunction with life support equipment. In other words, a generator that provides backup power to LSC required systems or equipment is a required generator and must be installed, tested, and maintained in accordance with the applicable NFPA standard (76, 76A, 99, or 110).

Another common misconception is that remote annunciator panels were not manufactured for older Type 2 generators. All generators can have some type of a remote monitoring panel tied to it. The warning lamps needed on the remote panel will depend on the warning lamps on the panel attached to the generator. Older generators should have warning lamps for the conditions listed in NFPA 76, 1965 Edition Section 641 or NFPA 76A, 1970 Edition, Section 641. Newer generators should have warning lamps for the conditions listed in NFPA 110, 1999 Edition, Table 3-5.5.2(d). Those generators that don’t have any warning lamps on their panel still should have a remote panel that will give visual indication of the following conditions, which is part of NFPA 76A, 1970 Edition, Section 641:

1. When the emergency or auxiliary power source is operating to supply power to load.
2. When the battery charger is malfunctioning.

Generators are not sold as Type 1, 2, or 3. Type refers to the Essential Electrical System (EES) and 1, 2, or 3 is dependent upon how the system is wired. There are Level 1 and 2 generators, both of which have remote annunciator panel requirements. Type 1 and 2 EESs, which are in most nursing homes, are required to have Level 1 generators, which have the full remote annunciator panel requirement. Generators that are not currently tied to a remote panel do not have to be replaced if they are in good operating condition. Rather, a remote panel will need to be connected with the appropriate lamps as outlined above.

IHCA ICAL members can contact Kelly Meyers at kmeyers@iowahealthcare.org or 800.422.3106 with questions.