

F94-09/10
906.1 (IBC [F] 906.1)

Proposed Change as Submitted

Proponent: Robert J Davidson, Code Consultant/Alan Shuman, President, representing the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM)

Revise as follows:

906.1 (IBC [F] 906.1) Where required. Portable fire extinguishers shall be installed in the following locations.

1. In new and existing Group A, B, E, F, H, I, M, R-1, R-2, R-4 and S occupancies.

~~**Exception:** In new and existing Group A, B and E occupancies equipped throughout with quick response sprinklers, portable fire extinguishers shall be required only in locations specified in Items 2 through 6.~~

2. Within 30 feet (9144 mm) of commercial cooking equipment.
3. In areas where flammable or *combustible liquids* are stored, used or dispensed.
4. On each floor of structures under construction, except Group R-3 occupancies, in accordance with Section 1415.1.
5. Where required by the sections indicated in Table 906.1.
6. Special-hazard areas, including but not limited to laboratories, computer rooms and generator rooms, where required by the *fire code official*.

Reason: Fire extinguishers have historically been the first line of defense for small, controllable fires. They are intended to be used for fires of limited size and easily controlled. If a fire is discovered in its early stages the most effective means of protecting life and preventing property loss is to sound an alarm and then to control and/or extinguish the incipient stage fire with a portable fire extinguisher. To simply wait for the fire to grow to size large enough for a sprinkler head to activate is contrary to lessons and guidance from the fire service and fire protection professionals. Since fire extinguishers provide a first line of defense vs. sprinklers, it remains unclear as to the justification for this exception. In that light, the Exception 1 to Section 906.1 should be deleted.

This exception was not in the original draft of the International Fire Code and it did not exist in any of the legacy fire codes. It currently does not exist in NFPA 1 Uniform Fire Code, NFPA 10 Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers or NFPA 5000 Building Construction and Safety Code. It first appeared in the Final Draft of the 2000 editions of the IFC/IBC. Since the first publication of the International Fire Code, some fire service and fire protection professionals have expressed concern over the inclusion of an exception.

As a result a number of states have deleted the exception upon adoption of the IFC/IBC.

12 States plus Washington D.C. and New York City have Deleted Line 1 Exception.

2 States have amended Section 906.1 and the exception to require more extinguishers

2 States use both NFPA 1 and the IFC with more stringent code applicable.

17 additional States have adopted NFPA 1 as their fire code instead of the IFC.

A total of 33 State jurisdictions and an unknown number of local jurisdictions have chosen to delete the exception in favor of providing the ability to control a fire at its earliest stages.

There are other issues with this exception that have arisen since states have now been adopting the IFC and enforcing it within their state. Some examples are:

The exception is not being interpreted correctly and as a result is not being limited to occupancies with "QUICK RESPONSE" sprinklers installed. Instead, it is being applied in all cases where "REGULAR" sprinklers are installed.

When an occupancy is being renovated and the sprinkler system is updated, presently installed extinguishers are being removed, lessening the level of protection available.

Fire code officials do not all see hazard areas the same and as a result Section 906.1, Item 6 is not consistently applied jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Some officials are exempting all extinguishers from being required thereby placing the occupants in danger at the time of a fire.

An added detriment is that if a building is occupied without fire extinguishers the ability of the building owner to properly and effectively place fire extinguishers is negatively impacted by the practical difficulty of installing fire extinguisher cabinets. Walls may not be thick enough for recessing the cabinets to keep the fire extinguishers from being obstructions to travel or from being hit and damaged themselves. If the walls and partitions can handle the recessed cabinets, design drawings and permits may be required to modify the walls and partitions.

This proposal will eliminate the exception and provide for the proper placement of an important firefighting tool.

Cost Impact: The code change proposal will cause a cost increase in new construction.

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