
VISUAL ALARMS IN CLASSROOMS

IR 11B-1

References:

2001 California Building Code, Sections 1114B.2.4 and 3505.1 Sec. 4-4.5
Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design 4.1.1(1) and 4.1.3(14)
California Government Code, Section 4451(d)

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Discipline: Access Compliance

This Interpretation of Regulations (IR) is intended for use by the Division of the State Architect (DSA) staff, and as a resource for design professionals, to promote more uniform statewide criteria for plan review and construction inspection of projects within the jurisdiction of DSA. This IR indicates an acceptable method for achieving compliance with applicable codes and regulations, although other methods proposed by design professionals may be considered by DSA.

This IR is reviewed on a regular basis and is subject to revision at any time. Please check the DSA web site for currently effective IRs. Only IRs listed in the document at <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/Resources/IRManual.aspx> at the time of plan submittal to DSA are considered applicable.

Purpose: This interpretation clarifies acceptable design and installation requirements for fire alarm systems installed in new buildings containing classrooms for projects under Division of the State Architect (DSA) jurisdiction, which includes state-funded buildings and facilities, State of California public elementary and secondary schools (grades K-12), community colleges, and universities. (In the 2007 CBC this issue is addressed in Section 907.9.1.1.) (In the 2010 CBC this issue is addressed in Section 907.5.2.3.1.)

General: Unlike audible alarms, visual alarms are typically located within the space they serve so the signal is visible to the occupants of the space. The Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design, Section 4.1.3(14) indicates that when emergency warning systems are provided, they shall include both audible and visual alarms. Since classrooms in newly constructed buildings are required to be accessible by Section 4.1.1(1), where audible alarm coverage is provided, the emergency warning system shall also provide visual alarm coverage.

Design Requirements: Per California Government Code 4451(d), until such building standards are published in the California Building Standards Code that meet or exceed the requirements of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act, specifically in this case the Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design, Section 4.1.3(14), effective March 1, 2005, DSA will accept construction documents for new construction (new buildings) that indicate visual fire alarm coverage for all classrooms¹ that are provided with audible fire alarm coverage.

¹ United States Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board: ADAAG Manual, A guide to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines, July 1998, p. 98, Visual Alarms (4.28.3); Technical Bulletin: Visual Alarms, August, 2003,
<http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/about/bulletins/alarms.htm>
or
<http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/about/bulletins/pdf/alarms.pdf>