

THE WATCHMAN

**Suggestions for Guidance in his
Selection, Instruction and Duties**

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**NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION
ASSOCIATION**

60 Batterymarch St., Boston, Mass.

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THE WATCHMAN

A Position of Trust

1. The watchman is an important factor in the protection of property against fire and theft and, as a rule, acquits himself creditably.

Fires are frequently reported where the watchman has, by his vigilance, given the alarm promptly or otherwise acted effectively. Also, it must undoubtedly be recognized that fires are prevented from starting by reason of the wakeful, loyal and conscientious watchman.

2. The employer must have implicit confidence in him, for the watchman's responsibility is great and he is often in sole charge over half of the time. Care should therefore be taken to:

Get the right man.

Support him thoroughly.

Instruct him fully.

This is simply the common sense view that men uniformly apply in selecting any employee.

3. Get the Right Man.

Character, habits and reliability must be unquestioned. Demand references *and verify them* unless the man is personally known.

A non-smoker is preferred; in no event should a man be employed who cannot refrain from smoking while on his rounds.

Intelligence should be keen. Emergencies require quick decisions and good judgment.

His temperament should be such that he will not be likely to become confused or "rattled" in an emergency.

He should be a courageous man.

Physical condition should be satisfactory. It is desirable to insist on his passing a physical examination. Essentials are

unimpaired eyesight, hearing and sense of smell; two legs and two arms; a sound heart; physical strength.

A very young, or an extremely aged, watchman should not be employed. A very young man ordinarily has not acquired judgment and a sense of responsibility. An extremely aged man is not likely to be alert or to have the requisite physical strength and endurance.

Mechanical ability is necessary. The watchman must handle mechanical devices in emergencies. Necessities vary in different properties, but in many he may have to use a hose stream, operate sprinkler or service valves when leaks occur, or start fire pumps.

The watchman's education should be at least average. He should speak English and be able to write a simple report.

An ex-fireman usually is a capable watchman.

4. Support him thoroughly.

The watchman should be required and encouraged—in addition to making his time records—to report the results of his work (preferably on a memorandum blank provided for his use). Such reports should be confidential and be submitted direct to the Superintendent or other responsible official.

When he finds dangerous or unsatisfactory conditions these should invariably be followed up and corrected.

No man can do his best without the whole-hearted support of his superiors.

5. Instruct him fully.

Instruction of the watchman should be the duty of a responsible person, preferably the Superintendent or other official in charge of the property.

It must be impressed thoroughly upon the watchman that while he is on duty he is the sole custodian of the property and will be held responsible for any occurrence within his control.

Superficial or general instructions are of small value. Be as specific as possible.

In instructing the watchman anticipate, so far as possible, emergencies that may confront him. Better judgment will result even though the actual emergency could not have been anticipated.

A thorough grounding at the start with reasonable follow-up is necessary.

6. The Watchman must know:

- a. The property from end to end; every nook and corner.
- b. The location of dangerous or especially hazardous machinery or materials.
- c. The location and care of hazardous manufacturing processes—especially those continuing during the night—such as dryers, annealing furnaces, etc.; also the proper temperatures at which these can safely operate.
- d. The location and purpose of all valves controlling sprinklers, also mill service and steam and gas lines.
- e. The electrical equipment; how to use switches so as to control the power and lighting systems when necessary and how to shut off current in case of accident.
- f. The property's private fire protection system; whether only fire pails or an elaborate sprinkler system.
NOTE.—If there is a private fire brigade it is well to have the watchman a member and take part in drills occasionally.
- g. How to start and operate the fire pumps.
- h. The location of all hydrants, standpipes and small hose connections and how to use them.
- i. How to use chemical extinguishers.
- j. The likely causes of fire, such as spontaneous combustion in waste cans, oily rags or overalls, rubbish, hot boxes in shafting or machines, etc.
- k. *What to do in case of fire and how to do it. Unless he can immediately extinguish it he must give the alarm at once.*
- l. The exact location of all fire alarm boxes—public and private—and how to give alarm from them.
- m. Whom to call on for aid, if necessary, and how to call them. Typed or printed instructions should be posted (preferably under glass).
- n. Where telephones are and how to use them.

o. How to shut off water in case of sprinkler leakage, a break in the service piping or in the steam or gas lines.

- p. Where extra sprinklers are kept and how to install them.
- q. "First Aid to the Injured" and have access to a "First Aid Kit."

7. The Watchman's Route.

The watchman's route should be carefully laid out. The Inspection Department having jurisdiction should be consulted. A plan or other record of the route should be preserved.

The route should:

- Take the watchman through the entire area.
- Preferably not force him to retrace his steps.
- Not permit short-cuts by stairways, elevators or bridges.
- Not require more than 40 minutes.

8. Time Recording Apparatus.

To insure the systematic covering of the route one of the following approved watchman's recording systems is essential:

- Central Station Service.
- Local or Private Stationary System.
- Portable Watch Clock.

The property owner should consult the Inspection Department having jurisdiction to determine the system best suited to his needs.

Recording apparatus shall be approved and installed strictly in accordance with the Regulations for the Installation and Use of Signaling Systems and subject to the approval of the Inspection Department having jurisdiction.

9. Time Records.

Time records should be changed by the Superintendent or other responsible person; the watchman must never be allowed to change the records or have access to the clock keys.

Records should be carefully reviewed by a responsible person who should note any irregularities and immediately and thoroughly investigate.

Records should be dated and filed in order, pending periodic review by the Inspection Department having jurisdiction.

Occasional irregularities in records, for which good reasons are given, may well be considered evidence of faithful service.

A skipped or late station or rounds may, however, be evidence of careless or incompetent watching.

Good judgment in reviewing time records and investigating lapses is very necessary.

10. Rounds.

Rounds should be made hourly during any period (nights, Sundays and holidays) when the property is not operating.

Hourly night rounds are required in certain types of buildings which never close, such as apartment houses, hotels, hospitals, telephone exchanges, etc.

Day and night rounds are required during operating periods in some industrial properties, where the hazards involved warrant it.

In certain industrial properties having severe or unusual hazards half-hourly rounds are desirable. In others, conditions may permit bi-hourly day rounds.

The Inspection Department having jurisdiction should always be consulted and its approval secured of plans to be adopted at each individual property; no general rule can be set down for all.

11. The Watchman's Duties.

a. To discover fire and extinguish it at the very start, while it is smouldering and before the blaze breaks out.

b. To find leakage from water mains or sprinklers and from steam or gas piping.

NOTE.—Immediate notification to those in authority and quick repairs are absolutely essential.

c. To prevent trespass and theft. He should not allow visiting even by personal acquaintances.

d. To note evidence of infractions of plant discipline and report them.

The watchman must realize that these are his primary duties and that the time records of his rounds are simply evidence that he is "on the job," and benefit him not less than his employer.

The watchman, generally speaking, should not have other duties than those described herein. In a small property, however, where the round does not exceed a maximum of 30 min-

utes, he may perform other work, providing it does not take more than 10 minutes in each hour. Gate duty may be performed during the rest period, when the size of the watchman force permits this to be scheduled.

12. Night Watch.

The night watchman should report at a stated time shortly before the departure of those whose responsibilities he assumes.

He should carry constantly while on his round a reliable electric lantern or flash light or an approved oil lantern.

Where practicable separate circuits of electric lights should be installed to facilitate the watchman's work.

First Round.

This should be a real inspection of the premises. During it conditions will be found and corrected which otherwise might cause fire during the night. It should begin as soon as the day's activities stop. During it the watchman should make sure the property is properly closed for the night. He should see that:

a. Outside doors are closed and locked, windows, skylights, fire doors and fire shutters are closed.

b. All oily waste and rubbish have been removed.

c. Fire apparatus is in place and not obstructed.

d. Aisles are all clear.

e. No cigar or cigarette stubs or burnt matches are about, indicating smoking in toilets, corners or elsewhere.

f. All gas or electric heaters, or flat irons, have been shut off.

g. Hazardous manufacturing processes have been left in safe condition. The temperature of dryers, annealing furnaces, etc., which continue operating during the night should be noted on all rounds.

h. Hazardous materials such as gasoline, rubber cement, etc., have been removed from buildings.

i. All sprinkler valves are open.

j. Heat is on, during cold weather, in all heated rooms.

The watchman should make notes of violations of these or other rules and report them to the Management next morning.

NOTE.—A simple report blank for this purpose is advised. The Inspection Department having jurisdiction may be consulted for its outline.

Impaired sprinkler protection, unheated areas endangering property and similar SERIOUS conditions should be reported at once to the superintendent or other responsible official and immediate action secured.

Last Round.

This should begin not more than one hour before the day's activities start. The watchman leaves the premises when he is properly relieved; never merely because his time has expired.

13. Day Watch:

The first round should start as soon as day watchman relieves the night watchman.

The last round should start not more than one hour before the arrival of the night watchman.

The day watchman should not leave the premises while on duty, nor until he is properly relieved.

14. Number of Watchmen Required.

The majority of plants can satisfactorily be covered by one man.

If a property is large enough so that the watchman cannot, without hurrying, cover his route in 40 minutes, it is evidence in itself that two or more men are needed.

It is dangerous policy and poor economy to cut down the rest period, shorten the route by omitting any building or room or even slightly to exceed the hourly interval between rounds.

Where two or more men are employed one should be appointed Head Watchman.

Watchmen should not all go out on their rounds together and come in together for the rest period.

Routes should be scheduled so that rest periods will be separate, thus insuring maximum watching service.

When there are two or more men the routes should be patrolled successively by each. This is preferable to the plan of assigning a route to each man.