

5 Fire Safety During Hospital Renovations Questions Answered

Meet our fire safety advisor, Josh "The Fire Geek" Brackett.

Josh is a licensed Fire Protection Engineer (PE), Senior Status as ASHE (SASHE) and Certified Healthcare Facility Manager (CHFM). As Life Safety Special Projects Manager at Baptist Health in Little Rock, Arkansas, Josh oversees Joint Commission compliance, energy management, construction policies and more.



Q: Who is responsible for adherence to fire code testing and maintenance?

A: "The ultimate responsibility lies with the Facilities Manager. If something goes wrong and the Joint Commission, State Inspector or Fire Marshal investigates, it's up to the FM to know and explain every detail: from what failed/broke to a list of Interim Life Safety Measures (ILSM) enacted as well as proof of repair, retesting and passing.

The Solution? "Having a solid ITM & ILSM process and training others on how to use it and enforcing consistency will help explain failures during surveys"

Q: What is the top fire safety challenge Josh encounters?

A: "Hands down it's an overall lack of understanding of the requirements during occupied renovations by everyone involved (architects, contractors, FMs, engineers, etc)"

Q: How do we know which fire codes to look for and follow?

A: "Start with determining what is required and then dig into how to implement the requirements" Josh recommends. The two main sources for what is required for hospitals by (CMS) are:

1. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101 (2012)
2. NFPA 99 (2012) - The Healthcare Facilities Code

[We dive further into the how to implement codes in our interview.](#)

Q: How do we handle regional fire codes?

A: "I am asked about this all of the time." And it's a significant challenge - mostly due to difference in codes adopted by state and local fire marshals and those adopted by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). "Try to get everyone (architect, engineers, contractors, FMs) on the same page regarding which codes are required for a specific jurisdiction before a project begins. This will go a long way in reducing time and costs by limiting RFIs and clarifications and/or change orders."

[See Josh's recommended sources for keeping track of regional codes.](#)

Q: When is a 1 hour fire rated construction barrier required?

A: "Start with NFPA 101 (2012), Chapters 18 and 19, which dictate the means of egress in any area undergoing construction shall comply with NFPA 241 (2009). It's also important to remember walls are treated and listed as an assembly, and to reference the listing requirements to ensure the wall is constructed appropriately."

[Read more about fire rated walls and the complete interview here.](#)