

National Electrical Code

ARTICLE 700 – EMERGENCY SYSTEMS

I. General

700.1. Scope

The provisions of this article apply to the electrical safety of the installation, operation, and maintenance of emergency systems consisting of circuits and equipment intended to supply, distribute, and control electricity for illumination or power, or both, to required facilities when the normal electrical supply or system is interrupted.

(FPN No. 1): For further information regarding wiring and installation of emergency systems in health care facilities, see Article 517.

(FPN No. 2): For further information regarding performance and maintenance of emergency systems in health care facilities, see Standard for Health Care Facilities, NFPA 99-2012.

(FPN No. 3): Emergency systems are generally installed in places of assembly where artificial illumination is required for safe exiting and for panic control in buildings subject to occupancy by large numbers of persons, such as hotels, theaters, sports arenas, health care facilities, and similar institutions. Emergency systems may also provide power for such functions as ventilation where essential to maintain life, fire detection and alarm systems, elevators, fire pumps, public safety communications systems, industrial processes where current interruption would produce serious life safety or health hazards, and similar functions.

(FPN No. 4): For specification of locations where emergency lighting is considered essential to life safety, see Life Safety Code, NFPA 101-2012.

(FPN No. 5): For further information regarding performance of emergency and standby power systems, see Standard for Emergency and Standby Power Systems, NFPA 110-1999.

700.2. Definitions

Emergency Systems. Those systems legally required and classed as emergency by municipal, state, federal or other codes, or by any governmental agency having jurisdiction. These systems are intended to automatically supply illumination, power or both, to designated areas and equipment in the event of failure of the normal supply or in the event of accident to elements of a system intended to supply, distribute, and control power and illumination essential for safety to human life.

Informational Note: Emergency systems are generally installed in places of assembly where artificial illumination is required for safe exiting and for panic control in buildings subject to occupancy by large numbers of persons, such as hotels, theatres, sports, arenas, health care facilities, and similar institutions. Emergency systems may also provide power for such functions as ventilation where essential to maintain life, fire detection and alarm systems, elevators, fire pumps, public safety communications systems, industrial processes where current interruption would produce serious life safety or health hazards, and similar functions.

Relay automatic Load Control. A device used to set normally dimmed or normally-off switched emergency lighting equipment to full power illumination levels in the event of a loss of the normal supply by bypassing the dimming/switching controls, and to return the emergency lighting equipment to normal status when the device senses the normal supply has been restored.

Informational Note: See ANSI/UL 924, Emergency Lighting and Power Equipment, for the requirements covering automatic load control relays.

700.3. Tests and Maintenance

(A) Conduct or Witness Test. The authority having jurisdiction shall conduct or witness a test of the complete system upon installation and periodically afterward.

(B) Tested Periodically. Systems shall be tested periodically on a schedule acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction to ensure the systems are maintained in proper operating condition.

(C) Battery Systems Maintenance. Where battery systems or unit equipment are involved, including batteries used for starting, control, or ignition in auxiliary engines, the authority having jurisdiction shall require periodic maintenance.

(D) Written Record. A written record shall be kept of such tests and maintenance.

(E) Testing Under Load. Means for testing all emergency lighting and power systems during maximum anticipated load conditions shall be provided.

Informational Note: For information on testing and maintenance of emergency power supply systems (EPSSs), see NFPA 110-2013, Standard for Emergency and Standby Power Systems.

700.4. Capacity

(A) Capacity and Rating. An emergency system shall have adequate capacity and rating for all loads to be operated simultaneously. The emergency system equipment shall be suitable for the maximum available fault current at its terminals.

(B) Selective Load Pickup, Load Shedding, and Peak Load Shaving. The alternate power source shall be permitted to supply emergency, legally required standby, and optional standby system loads where the source has adequate capacity or where automatic selective load pickup and load shedding is provided as needed to ensure adequate power to (1) the emergency circuits; (2) the legally required standby circuits; and (3) the optional standby circuits, in that order of priority. The alternate power source shall be permitted to be used for peak load shaving, provided the above conditions are met.

Peak load shaving operation shall be permitted for satisfying the test requirement of Section 700.3(B), provided all other conditions of Section 700.3 are met. A portable or temporary alternate source shall be available whenever the emergency generator is out of service for major maintenance or repair.

700.5. Transfer Equipment

(A) General. Transfer equipment, including automatic transfer switches, shall be automatic and identified for emergency use and approved by the authority having jurisdiction. Transfer equipment shall be designed and installed to prevent the inadvertent interconnection of normal and emergency sources of supply in any operation of the transfer equipment. Transfer equipment and electric power production systems installed to permit operation in parallel with the normal source shall meet the requirements of article 705.

(B) Bypass Isolation Switches. Means shall be permitted to bypass and isolate the transfer equipment. Where bypass isolation switches are used, inadvertent parallel operation shall be avoided.

(C) Automatic transfer switches shall be electrically operated and mechanically held. Automatic transfer switches, rated 1000 VAC and below, shall be listed for emergency system use.

(D) Use. Transfer equipment shall supply only emergency loads.

700-6. Signals.

Audible and visual signal devices shall be provided, where practicable, for the following purposes described in 700.6(A) through (D).

(A) Derangement. To indicate derangement of the emergency source.

(B) Carrying Load. To indicate that the battery is carrying load.

(C) Not Functioning. To indicate that the battery charger is not functioning.

(D) Ground Fault. To indicate a ground fault in solidly grounded wye emergency systems of more than 150 volts to ground and circuit protective devices rated 1000 amperes or more. The sensor for the ground-fault signal devices shall be located at, or ahead of, the main system disconnecting means for the emergency source, and the maximum setting of the signal devices shall be for a ground-fault current of 1200 amperes. Instructions on the course of action to be taken in event of indicated ground fault shall be located at or near the sensor location.

Informational Note: For signals for generator sets, see NFPA 110-2013, Standard for Emergency and Standby Power Systems

700.7. Signs

(A) Emergency Sources. A sign shall be placed at the service entrance equipment indicating type and location of on-site emergency power sources.

Exception: A sign shall not be required for individual unit equipment as specified in Section 700-12(F).

(B) Grounding. Where removal of a grounding or bonding connection in the normal power source equipment interrupts the grounding electrode conductor connection to the alternate power source(s) grounded conductor, a warning sign shall be installed at the normal power source equipment stating:

WARNING

SHOCK HAZARD EXISTS IF GROUNDING ELECTRODE CONDUCTOR OR BONDING JUMPER CONNECTION IN THIS EQUIPMENT IS REMOVED WHILE ALTERNATE SOURCE(S) IS ENERGIZED.

The warning sign(s) or label(s) shall comply with 110.21(B).

700.8 Emergency Sources

A listed SPD shall be installed in or on all emergency systems switchboards and panelboards.

II. Circuit Wiring

700-10. Wiring, Emergency System.

(A) Identification. All boxes and enclosures (including transfer switches, generators, and power panels) for emergency circuits shall be permanently marked so they will be readily identified as a component of an emergency circuit or system.

(B) Wiring. Wiring of two or more emergency circuits supplied from the same source shall be permitted in the same raceway, cable, box, or cabinet. Wiring from an emergency source distribution overcurrent protection to emergency loads shall be kept entirely independent of all other wiring and equipment, unless otherwise permitted in 700.10(B) (1) through (5):

- (1) Wiring from the normal power source located in transfer equipment enclosures.
- (2) Wiring supplied from two sources in exit or emergency luminaires
- (3) Wiring from two sources in a listed load control relay supplying exit or emergency luminaires, or in a common junction box, attached to exit or emergency luminaires
- (4) Wiring within a common junction box attached to unit equipment, containing only the branch circuit supplying the unit equipment and the emergency circuit supplied by the unit equipment.
- (5) Wiring from an emergency source to supply emergency and other loads in accordance with 700.10(B)(5)a, b, c, and d as follows:
 - a. Separate vertical switchgear sections or separate vertical switchboard sections, with or without a common bus, or individual disconnects mounted in separate enclosures shall be used to separate emergency loads from all other loads.
 - b. The common bus of separate sections of the switchgear, separate sections of the switchboard, or the individual enclosures shall be permitted to be supplied by single or multiple feeders without overcurrent protection at the source.

Exception to (5)b: Overcurrent protection shall be permitted at the source or for the equipment, provided the overcurrent protection complies with the requirements of 700.28.

- c. Legally required and optional standby circuits shall not originate from the same vertical switchboard section, panel board enclosure, or individual disconnect enclosure as emergency circuits.
- d. It shall be permissible to utilize single or multiple feeders to supply distribution equipment between an emergency source and the point where the combination of emergency, legally required, or optional loads are separated.

(C) Wiring Design and Location. Emergency wiring circuits shall be designed and located to minimize the hazards that might cause failure due to flooding, fire, icing, vandalism, and other adverse conditions.

(D) Fire Protection. Emergency systems shall meet the following additional requirements (D)(1) through (D)(3) in assembly occupancies for not less than 1000 persons or in buildings above 23 m (75 ft) in height.

Informational Note: For the definition of Occupancy Classification, see Section 6.1 of NFPA 101-2009, Life Safety Code

(1) Feeder-circuit wiring shall meet one of the following conditions:

- (1) Be installed in spaces or areas that are fully protected by an approved automatic fire suppression system.
- (2) Be listed electrical circuit protective system with a minimum 2-hour fire rating. Informational note: UL guide information for electrical circuit protective systems (FHIT) contains information on proper installation requirements to maintain the fire rating
- (3) Be protected by a listed thermal barrier system for electrical system components with a minimum 2-hour fire rating.
- (4) Be protected by a listed fire-rated assembly that has a minimum fire rating of 2 hours and contains only emergency wiring circuits
- (5) Be encased in a minimum of 50 mm (2 in) of concrete

(2) Feeder-Circuit Equipment. Equipment for feeder circuits (including transfer switches, transformers, panel boards) shall be either located in spaces fully protected by approved automatic fire suppression systems (including sprinklers and carbon dioxide systems) or in spaces with a 2-hour fire resistance rating.

(3) Generator Control Wiring. Control conductors installed between the transfer equipment and the emergency generator shall be kept entirely independent of all other wiring and shall meet the conditions of 700.10(D)(1)

III. Sources of Power

700.12. General Requirements. Current supply shall be such that, in the event of failure of the normal supply to, or within, the building or group of buildings concerned, emergency lighting, emergency power, or both will be available within the time required for the application but not to exceed 10 seconds. The supply system for emergency purposes, in addition to the normal services to the building and meeting the general requirements of this section, shall be one or more of the types of systems described in 700.12(A) through (D) below. Unit equipment in accordance with Section 700.12(E) shall satisfy the applicable requirements of this article.

In selecting an emergency source of power, consideration shall be given to the occupancy and the type of service to be rendered, whether of minimum duration, as for evacuation of a theater, or longer duration, as for supplying emergency power and lighting due to an indefinite period of current failure from trouble either inside or outside the building. Equipment shall be designed and located to minimize the hazards that might cause complete failure due to flooding, fires, icing, and vandalism. Equipment for sources of power as described in Sections 700.12(A) through (E) where located within assembly occupancies for greater than 1000 persons or in buildings above 23 m (75 ft) in height with any of the following occupancy classes: assembly, educational, residential, detention and correctional, business, and mercantile, shall be installed either in spaces fully protected by approved automatic fire suppression systems (sprinklers, carbon dioxide systems, and so forth), or in spaces with a 1-hour fire rating.

Informational note No. 1: For definition of Occupancy Classification, see Section 6.1 of NFPA 101-2012, Life Safety Code.

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Informational note No. 2: For further information, see ANSI/IEEE 493-2007, Recommended Practice for the Design of Reliable Industrial and Commercial Power Systems.

(A) Storage Battery.

Storage batteries used as source of power for emergency systems shall be of suitable rating and capacity to supply and maintain the total load for a period of 1-1/2 hours minimum, without the voltage applied to the load falling below 87-1/2 percent of normal.

Batteries, whether of the acid or alkali type, shall be designed and constructed to meet the requirements of emergency service and shall be compatible with the charger for that particular installation.

For a sealed battery, the container shall not be required to be transparent. However, for the lead acid battery that requires water additions, transparent or translucent containers shall be furnished. Automotive-type batteries shall not be used.

An automatic battery charging means shall be provided.

(B) Generator Set.

(1) Prime Mover-Driven. For a generator set driven by a prime mover acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction and sized in accordance with Section 700-4. Means shall be provided for automatically starting the prime mover on failure of the normal service and for automatic transfer and operation of all required electrical circuits. A time-delay feature permitting a 15-minute setting shall be provided to avoid retransfer in case of short-time reestablishment of the normal source.

(2) Internal Combustion Engines as Prime Movers. Where internal combustion engines are used as the prime mover an on-site fuel supply shall be provided with an on-premise fuel supply sufficient for not less than 2 hours full-demand operation of the system. Where power is needed for the operation of the fuel transfer pumps to deliver fuel to a generator set dry tank, this pump shall be connected to the emergency power system.

(3) Dual Supplies. Prime movers shall not be solely dependent upon a public utility gas system for their fuel supply or municipal water supply for their cooling systems. Means shall be provided for automatically transferring from one fuel supply to another where dual fuel supplies are used.

Exception: Where acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction, the use of other than on-site fuels shall be permitted where there is a low probability of a simultaneous failure of both the off-site fuel delivery system and power from the outside electrical utility company.

(4) Where a storage battery is used for control or signal power, or as the means of starting the prime mover, it shall be suitable for the purpose and shall be equipped with an automatic charging means independent of the generator set. Where the battery charger is required for the operation of the generator set, it shall be connected to the emergency system. Where power is required for the operation of dampers used to ventilate the generator set, the dampers shall be connected to the emergency system.

(5) Auxiliary Power Supply. Generator sets that require more than 10 seconds to develop power shall be permitted is an auxiliary power supply energizes the emergency system until the generator can pick up the load.

(6) Outdoor Generator Sets. Where an outdoor housed generator set is equipped with a readily accessible disconnecting means in accordance with 445.18, and the disconnecting means is located within sight of the building or structure supplied, an additional disconnecting means shall not be required where ungrounded conductors serve or pass through the building or structure. Where the generator supply conductors terminate at a disconnecting means in or on a building or structure, the disconnecting means shall meet the requirements of 225.36.

Exception: For installations under single management where conditions of maintenance and supervision ensure that only qualified persons will monitor and service the installation and where documented safe switching procedures are established and maintained for disconnection, the generator set disconnecting means shall not be required to be located within sight of the building of structure served.

(C) Uninterruptible Power Supplies. Uninterruptible power supplies used to provide power for emergency systems shall comply with the applicable provisions of Sections 700-12(A) and (B).

(D) Separate Service. Where acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction as suitable for use as an emergency source of power, an additional service shall be permitted. This service shall be in accordance with the applicable provisions of Article 230 and following additional requirements.

(1) Separate overhead service conductors, service drops, underground service conductors, or service laterals shall be installed

(2) The service conductors for the separate service shall be installed sufficiently remote electrically and physically from any other service conductors to minimize the possibility of simultaneous interruption of supply

(E) Fuel Cell System. Fuel Cell Systems used as a source of power for emergency systems shall be of suitable rating and capacity to supply and maintain the total load for not less than 2 hours of full demand operation.

Installation of a fuel cell system shall meet the requirements of Parts II through VIII of Article 692. Where a single fuel cell system serves as the normal supply for the building or group of buildings concerned, it shall not serve as the sole source of power for the emergency standby system.

(F) Unit Equipment.

(1) Components of Unit Equipment. Individual unit equipment for emergency illumination shall consist of the following:

(1) A rechargeable battery

(2) A battery charging means

(3) Provisions for one or more lamps mounted on the equipment, or shall be permitted to have terminals for remote lamps, or both and

(4) A relaying device arranged to energize the lamps automatically upon failure of the supply to the unit equipment.

(2) Installation of Unit Equipment. Unit equipment shall be installed in accordance with 700.12(F)(2)(1) through (6).

(1) The batteries shall be of suitable rating and capacity to supply and maintain at not less than 87-1/2 percent of the nominal battery voltage for the total lamp load associated with the unit for a period of at least 1-1/2 hours, or the unit equipment shall supply and maintain not less than 60 percent of the initial emergency illumination for a period of at least 1-1/2 hours. Storage batteries, whether of the acid or alkali type, shall be designed and constructed to meet the requirements of emergency service.

(2) Unit equipment shall be permanently fixed in place (i.e., not portable) and shall have all wiring to each unit installed in accordance with the requirements of any of the wiring methods in Chapter 3. Flexible cord and plug connection shall be permitted, provided that the cord does not exceed 900 mm (3 ft) in length.

(3) The branch circuit feeding the unit equipment shall be the same branch circuit as that serving the normal lighting in the area and connected ahead of any local switches.

Exception : In a separate and uninterrupted area supplied by a minimum of three normal lighting circuits, a separate branch circuit for unit equipment shall be permitted if it

originates from the same panelboard as that of the normal lighting circuits and is provided with a lock-on feature.

- (4) The branch circuit that feeds unit equipment shall be clearly identified at the distribution panel.
- (5) Emergency luminaire's (illumination fixtures) that obtain power from a unit equipment and are not part of the unit equipment shall be wired to the unit equipment as required by Section 700-10 and by one of the wiring methods of Chapter 3.
- (6) Remote heads providing lighting for the exterior of an exit door shall be permitted to be supplied by the unit equipment serving the area immediately inside the exit door

IV. Emergency System Circuits for Lighting and Power

700.15.

Loads on Emergency Branch Circuits. No appliances and no lamps, other than those specified as required for emergency use, shall be supplied by emergency lighting circuits.

700.16.

Emergency illumination. Emergency illumination shall include all required means of egress lighting, illuminated exit signs, and all other lights specified as necessary to provide required illumination.

Emergency lighting systems shall be designed and installed so that the failure of any individual lighting element, such as the burning out of a light bulb, cannot leave in total darkness any space that requires emergency illumination.

Where high-intensity discharge lighting such as high- and low-pressure sodium mercury vapor, and metal halide is used as the sole source of normal illumination, the emergency lighting system shall be required to operate until normal illumination has been restored. Where an emergency system is installed, emergency illumination shall be provided in the area of the disconnecting means required by 225.31 and 230.70, as applicable, where the disconnecting means are installed indoors.

Exception: Where alternative means that ensure the emergency lighting illumination level is maintained shall be permitted.

700.17. Branch Circuits for Emergency Lighting. Branch circuits that supply emergency lighting shall be installed to provide service from a source complying with Section 700-12 when the normal supply for lighting is interrupted. Such installations shall provide either one of the following:

- (1) An emergency lighting supply, independent of the normal lighting supply, with provisions for automatically transferring the emergency lights upon the event of failure of the normal lighting branch circuit
- (2) Two or more branch circuits supplied from separate and complete systems with independent power sources. One of the two power sources and systems shall be part of the emergency system and the other shall be permitted to be part of the normal power source and system. Each system shall provide sufficient power for emergency lighting purposes.

Unless both systems are used for regular lighting purposes and are both kept lighted, means shall be provided for automatically energizing either system upon failure of the other. Either or both systems shall be permitted to be a part of the general lighting of the protected occupancy if circuits supplying lights for emergency illumination are installed in accordance with other sections of this article.

700.18. Circuits for Emergency Power. For branch circuits that supply equipment classed as emergency, there shall be an emergency supply source to which the load will be transferred automatically upon the failure of the normal supply.

V. Control—Emergency Lighting Circuits

700.19. Multiwire Branch Circuits. The branch circuit serving emergency lighting and power circuits shall not be part of a multiwire branch circuit.

700.20. Switch Requirements. The switch or switches installed in emergency lighting circuits shall be arranged so that only authorized persons will have control of emergency lighting.

Exception No. 1: Where two or more single-throw switches are connected in parallel to control a single circuit, at least one of these switches shall be accessible only to authorized persons.

Exception No. 2: Additional switches that act only to put emergency lights into operation but not disconnect them shall be permissible. Switches connected in series or 3- and 4-way switches shall not be used.

700.21. Switch Location. All manual switches for controlling emergency circuits shall be in locations convenient to authorized persons responsible for their actuation. In facilities covered by Articles 518 and 520, a switch for controlling emergency lighting systems shall be located in the lobby or at a place conveniently accessible thereto. In no case shall a control switch for emergency lighting be placed in a motion-picture projection booth or on a stage or platform. Exception: Where multiple switches are provided, one such switch shall be permitted in such locations where arranged so that it can energize the circuit only, but cannot deenergize the circuit.

700.22. Exterior Lights. Those lights on the exterior of a building that are not required for illumination when there is sufficient daylight shall be permitted to be controlled by an automatic light-actuated device.

700.23 Dimmer Systems. A dimmer or relay system containing more than one dimmer or relay and listed for use in emergency systems shall be permitted to be used as a control device for energizing emergency lighting circuits. Upon failure of normal power, the dimmer or relay system shall be permitted to selectively energize only those branch circuits required to provide minimum emergency illumination. All branch circuits supplied by the dimmer or relay system cabinet shall comply with the wiring methods of Article 700.

700.24 Automatic Load Control Relay. Where emergency illumination is provided by one or more directly controlled luminaires that respond to an external control input to bypass normal control upon loss of normal power, such luminaires and external bypass controls shall be individually listed for use in emergency systems.

700.25 Automatic Load Control Relay. If an emergency lighting load is automatically energized upon loss of the normal supply, a listed automatic load control relay shall be permitted to energize the load. The load control relay shall not be used as transfer equipment.

VI. Overcurrent Protection

700-26. Accessibility. The branch-circuit overcurrent devices in emergency circuits shall be accessible to authorized persons only.

700-27. Ground-Fault Protection of Equipment. The alternate source for emergency systems shall not be required to have ground-fault protection of equipment with automatic disconnecting means. Ground-fault indication of the emergency source shall be provided in accordance with 700.6(D) if ground-fault protection of equipment with automatic disconnecting means is not provided. Exception: Selective coordination shall not be required between two overcurrent devices located in series if no loads are connected in parallel with the downstream device.

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