

**NC Department of Insurance
Office of the State Fire Marshal - Engineering Division
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Automatic and Manual Fire Alarms

Code: 2018 Fire Prevention Code
Section: 202

Date: September 7, 2018

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Question:

What is the difference between a manual fire alarm system and an automatic fire alarm system?

Answer:

A majority of traditional alarm systems consist of the alarm notification devices and an alarm panel. These two components are designed and installed in accordance with NFPA 72 with the ultimate purpose of sounding an evacuation signal to instruct the occupants to leave the building.

The difference between manual and automatic fire alarm system is the method to how the panel, and subsequently the alarm notification devices are activated. A manual system is intended to be limited to the pull stations, unless otherwise indicated within the Fire Prevention Code.

Only when there is a specific reference to smoke detector, such as the requirement for Group I occupancies in Section 907.2.6 are they required by the Fire Prevention Code.