



Date: December 1, 2023
To: City of Houston HPW-HPC
Attention: CCM
From: Jensen Hughes
Subject: IFC Fire Command Center Locations

This technical memo is provided to describe the significant changes to the Houston Construction Codes with regards to the requirements for Fire Command Center Locations.

From the International Code Council: Fire-fighting operations at large warehouse buildings in excess of 500,000 square feet face similar challenges to fire fighters as operating in high-rise buildings. Large structures of this size pose a variety of challenges (ex. distribution of smoke, difficulty to locate and reach fire, and difficulty to search and evacuate people) to emergency responders due to the large amount of fuel loading from the storage, manufacturing or processing of high-hazard commodities and plastics within the building. These structures are typically required by code to be equipped with numerous fire protection and detection systems. During a fire, it is critical that the incident commander has the ability to readily identify the status of the various fire protection and detection systems and have access to other building information details (ex. Floor plans, sprinkler zones, etc).

Additionally, a fire command center provides a centralized location for the incident commander to review details about the building and the incident and to effectively coordinate emergency responders and suppression activities with increased efficiency and speed.

The location of the room must be approved by the fire code official, as listed in **Houston IFC Amendments, Section 508.1.1** (and **Houston IBC Amendments, Section 911.1.1**) and the entry door to the room must be identified as the fire command center per **Section 508.1.7**.

Note that for new buildings, the location of the Fire Command Center must have street access directly from the exterior, through an entrance lobby, or through a 1-hour rated protected pathway per **Houston IBC Amendment, Section 911.1.1**.

It should be noted that the size of a fire command center in Group F-1 and S-1 occupancies is different from that in a high-rise building. This is applicable since the number of systems required in these occupancies is fewer than in high-rises. The minimum size of a fire command center is 96 square feet.

The word "accessibility" is changed in Section **508.1.1** to eliminate confusion around the concept of "accessibility" as used in Chapter 11 of the International Building Code (IBC) for example, ADA requirements.

memo.

2021 Houston Fire Code Changes –**SECTION 508
FIRE COMMAND CENTER**

508.1 General. Where required by other sections of this code and in all buildings classified as high-rise buildings by the International Building Code and in all F-1 and S-1 Occupancies with a building footprint of over 500,000 square feet, a fire command center for fire department operations shall be provided and shall comply with Sections 508.1.1 through 508.1.7.

508.1.1 Location and Access. The location and ~~accessibility of~~ access to the fire command center shall be approved by the fire code official. The fire command center room shall be on the building floor having street access. Access to the room shall be either directly from the exterior, through an entrance lobby or through a 1-hour rated corridor leading directly to the exterior.

508.1.3 Size. The fire command center shall be not less than 0.015 percent of the total building area of the facility served or 200 square feet (19 m²) in area, whichever is greater, with a minimum dimension of 0.7 times the square root of the room area or 10 feet (3048 mm), whichever is greater.

Where a fire command center is required for Group F-1 and S-1 occupancies with a building footprint greater than 500,000 square feet (46 452 m²) in area the fire command center shall have a minimum size of 96 square feet (9 m²) with a minimum dimension of 8 feet (2348 mm) where approved by the fire code official.

508.1.7 Fire Command Center Identification. The fire command center shall be identified by a permanent easily visible sign stating "FIRE COMMAND CENTER" located on the door to the fire command center.

2021 Houston Building Code Changes –

911.1.1 Location and Access. The location and access to the fire command center shall be approved by the fire code official. The fire command center room shall be on the building floor having street access. Access to the room shall be either directly from the exterior, through an entrance lobby or through a 1-hour rated corridor leading directly to the exterior.