



Mike DeWine, Governor  
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Department  
of Commerce

Division of State Fire Marshal  
Sheryl Maxfield, Director



Technical Bulletin 19-003  
May 2019

---

## Major Fires or Explosions Must be Reported

### Fires or explosions at places of worship or educational facilities are deemed “major”

---

Pursuant to the Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) and the Ohio Fire Code (OFC) major fires or explosions shall be investigated. Those investigating any major fire shall forthwith notify the Ohio Department of Commerce, Division of State Fire Marshal (SFM) of any major fire or explosion occurring in their jurisdiction. See R.C. §3737.24 and OFC §104.10.3.

The OFC defines a major fire or explosion as:

**104.10.2 Major fire definition.** For the purposes of section 3737.24 of the Revised Code, a "major fire or explosion" means:

- (i) A fire or explosion that caused or had a substantial risk of causing death or serious physical harm to any person.
- (ii) A fire or explosion that caused damage to or the destruction of any occupancy, property or vehicle and the estimated or actual loss associated with such fire or explosion exceeds \$500,000 in value.
- (iii) A fire or explosion that caused damage to or the destruction of any occupancy, property or vehicle that is owned, leased or directly controlled by the United States of America, the State of Ohio or any political subdivision of the State, including schools and other educational institutions;
- (iv) A fire or explosion that any political subdivision Fire Chief determines, in that Chief's discretion, to be a significant fire within that Chief's jurisdiction.
- (v) Any fire or explosion so designated by the state fire marshal as a major fire or explosion.

One of the following is responsible for investigating major fires or explosions:

- The state fire marshal or an assistant state fire marshal as designated by the state fire marshal
- The chief of the fire department of each municipal corporation in which a fire department is established
- The chief of the fire department in each township in which a fire department is established
- The chief of the fire department of a joint fire district

- The fire prevention officer in each township or village where no fire department is established

See R.C. §3737.24 and OFC §104.10.

The SFM considers the targeting of places of worship, governmental buildings and educational occupancies to be an “emerging homeland security threat” and hereby designates any such fire or explosion incident as a ‘major fire or explosion’. Thus, in addition to the categories already expressed in OFC §104.10 noted above, fires or explosions at **places of worship and educational facilities (even if privately owned)** are now incidents that require investigation by one of the fire officials listed in the previous paragraph.

### Reporting Timelines

The second important part of the “major fire” regulations is the required reporting of such fires by local fire agencies to the SFM. As always, **notification must be made immediately to the SFM in the case of any “fire or explosion that caused or had a substantial risk of causing death or serious physical harm to any person.”** See OFC § 104.10.3.

Additionally, the following major fires must be reported to the State Fire Marshal’s Office *immediately*, or as soon as is practical following achievement of life safety objectives:

- Any fire involving a fatality or serious injury to occupants or responders.
- Any fire or explosion involving a place of worship and/or religious gathering that is deemed intentionally set or undetermined in origin.
- Any fire or explosion in an *occupied* educational or governmental occupancy that is deemed intentionally set or is undetermined in origin.

All other major fires must be reported to the SFM ‘forthwith’ or within 24-hours of their occurrence, including:

- Any fire or explosion involving property loss in excess of \$500,000 in value
- Any fire or explosion that the Fire Chief determines to be significant within their jurisdiction
- Any fire or explosion so designated by the SFM
- Any fire or explosion in an *unoccupied* educational or governmental occupancy or that otherwise caused damage to or destruction of property or vehicles owned, leased, or controlled by the US government, the State of Ohio, or a political subdivision thereof.

Report such incidents to the SFM’s Fire and Explosion Investigations Bureau’s (FEIB) investigative hotline at 1-800-589-2728. Please note that this hotline is used to make notification and also to request an investigator from the SFM’s FEIB. Please select the appropriate prompt and/or clearly explain to the Dispatcher whether your agency is making a “notification only” or is also requesting an SFM Investigator.

For further information, please contact the FEIB’s main office during regular business hours at 1-614-752-7106.