SCHOOL DISTRICT PALM BEACH COUNTY
BUILDING CODE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
CODE INTERPRETATION

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Subject Title: Existing School Fire Alarm Systems

Applicable Code: 2017 FBC-B Section 453.7.4

Date: August 27, 2018

Question:
When is the voice feature required for fire alarm systems on an existing campus?

Answer:
The voice feature is required when the entire fire alarm system is replaced.

Requirements for the voice feature on partial system replacements will be determined by the Building Code Services Department on a case-by-case basis using the following guidelines:

1. In facilities requiring replacement of existing fire alarm control panel, the new control panel must have the capabilities for voice communication feature.

2. In facilities requiring replacement or upgrade of existing underground fire alarm cables, the new wiring must be able to carry voice communication, and in conjunction with wiring upgrade, the existing fire alarm panel must be replaced with a new panel with voice communication feature.

3. When existing fire alarm horns are being totally replaced (all devices in a building), the new devices must be speaker type for voice communication system, and in conjunction with the horn upgrade, the existing fire alarm panel must be replaced with a new panel with voice communication feature.

4. Replacement of existing initiating devices such as heat detectors, smoke detectors, and pull-stations will not require any additional upgrade to the system.

5. If a new building is added to an existing site and the new building floor area exceeds 50% of the existing building floor area; then the new building must have voice alarm system which will require replacement of existing fire alarm panel with a new unit capable of voice communication feature.

6. Addition of few new horns in an existing building will not require any additional upgrade to the system.