NFPA 241 and Healthcare Construction

THE DIRECT ANSWER

NFPA 241, Safeguarding Construction, Alteration, and Demolition Operations , is the standard for fire safety during construction — temporary wiring, hot work, combustible storage, fire protection impairments, and the temporary barriers and separations that protect occupied areas while work is underway. In healthcare construction, NFPA 241 is the fire-side companion to the ICRA: ICRA protects patients from dust and infection; NFPA 241 protects them from fire during the project.

WHAT NFPA 241 REQUIRES

- Temporary barriers: construction separations between work zones and occupied areas — where the project is a higher hazard than the occupied building, 1-hour fire resistance with 45-minute opening protection.
- Hot work controls: permits, fire watch, and combustible control for welding, cutting, and burning.
- Impairment management: procedures when sprinklers, alarms, or detection are impaired — including fire watch when sprinklers are out over 10 cumulative hours in 24 (alarm impairments: 4 hours).
- Housekeeping: control of combustible debris and storage in and around the construction area.
- Access for firefighting: maintaining fire department access and standpipe/hydrant availability.

THE HEALTHCARE INTERSECTION

- NFPA 241 shows up by reference across the healthcare compliance world: ICRA Class IV requires "critical barriers meeting NFPA 241," Joint Commission ILSM measures require smoketight noncombustible temporary partitions, and CMS K-tags cite construction-related fire deficiencies.

FIELD QUESTION

What does NFPA 241 cover?

Fire safety during construction, alteration, and demolition — temporary barriers, hot work, impairments, housekeeping, and firefighter access.

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