

NFPA 903 Fire Reporting Property Survey Guide

1996 Edition



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An International Codes and Standards Organization

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NFPA 903

Fire Reporting Property Survey Guide

1996 Edition

This edition of NFPA 903, *Fire Reporting Property Survey Guide*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Reporting and acted on by the National Fire Protection Association, Inc., at its Annual Meeting held May 20–23, 1996, in Boston, MA. It was issued by the Standards Council on July 18, 1996, with an effective date of August 9, 1996, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 903 was approved as an American National Standard on July 26, 1996.

Origin and Development of NFPA 903

This guide and Form 903SR, Basic Structure Report, and Form 903TR, Basic Occupancy Report, were developed in 1977 in recognition of the need to collect information on a property before the occurrence of a fire at that property. The forms allow the user to develop a property inventory that can be used to perform some risk evaluation and also to provide data useful in post-fire evaluations. By referencing NFPA 901, *Standard Classifications for Incident Reporting and Fire Protection Data*, and using the classifications and definitions contained therein, data can be maintained in a uniform manner.

In 1981 and 1986, minor changes were made to the guide to refine the forms and instructions based on user feedback. The text was reconfirmed in 1992.

In preparation for this edition, the committee reviewed the data that it was suggesting be collected. The review included how useful the data was and how accurately it could be collected. A number of data elements were dropped or modified, while others that previously required the data to be classified after being recorded were changed to a direct entry format.

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This list represents the membership at the time the Committee was balloted on the text of this edition. Since that time, changes in the membership may have occurred.

NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on standard methods of compiling fire experience data by the fire service. The main purposes of this Committee are to develop standard occupancy and cause classification for use by cities and states in the reporting of fires, to suggest other useful information that needs to be collected, and to develop standard forms for these purposes.

Contents

Introduction	903– 4
General Applications	903– 4
Examples	903– 5
Preparation of the Basic Property/Structure Report	903– 5
Preparation of the Basic Occupancy Report	903– 5
Appendix A Referenced Publications	903–23

NFPA 903**Fire Reporting Property Survey Guide****1996 Edition**

NOTICE: Information on referenced publications can be found in Appendix A.

Introduction

Fire service personnel have recognized the need to become more effective in their attempts to educate people about fire-safe habits, to make or suggest changes in fire and building codes, and to show clearly the value of fire service personnel through the collection and use of meaningful data.

To help develop a uniform system of recording basic data on properties and fires involving those properties, the NFPA established a Technical Committee on Fire Reporting in 1962. Using information available in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia, the committee devised a standard language of fire reporting, which is published as NFPA 901, *Standard Classifications for Incident Reporting and Fire Protection Data*. That document serves as a system description, glossary, and dictionary for the building of a full and eventually international system of data collection for control of the fire threat.

This edition of NFPA 903, *Fire Reporting Property Survey Guide*, together with the Basic Property/Structure Report (Form 903SR) and the Basic Occupancy Report (Form 903TR), provides a method for fire department personnel to use in collecting selected information regarding the prefire risk of the structures within their jurisdiction. This data is designed to provide a general property inventory that can yield a general building risk. The information can form the basis of a method for gradually reducing this risk. This system is not designed to produce a prefire plan, fire equipment readiness report, or code conformance report. The survey used to gather the data recorded on Form 903SR and Form 903TR also is not a substitute for a fire protection engineering evaluation of the property.

The use of a property survey guide is extremely important for fire departments that are involved in the master planning process. One of the most frequent criticisms of fire-fighting agencies is that they lack objective data on their fire problem in order to develop the community's fire defenses. If a community establishes a planning process and utilizes the Basic Property/Structure Report (Form 903SR) and the Basic Occupancy Report (Form 903TR), it possesses invaluable documentation that quantifies the scope and severity of a community's fire problem.

Those who wish to use only a portion of this guide and the basic forms are welcome to do so. Those who wish to include additional details are encouraged to use the basic forms with supplementary forms as needed. An experience log sheet is useful in recording all nonfire and fire visits to the property.

Compilation of data can be done manually, semiautomatically, or automatically. The data can be responsive to fire department and municipal management needs for tactical, strategic, fire prevention, and public relations use. The data is adaptable to the new systems concept of fire protection, and work is progressing toward the development of a method to evaluate each item collected and produce a relative risk num-

ber. The use of these forms and this guide produces a meaningful report on each structure surveyed, and an orderly program for increasing the prefire defenses of that structure can be established based on the findings of the survey.

General Applications**I. Definitions.**

Grade. A reference plane representing the elevation of finished ground level adjoining the building at the main entrance.

Occupancy. A specific space, usually within a structure, devoted to a use by a single business or tenant.

Property. A defined piece of land and any structures, equipment, or stock thereon.

Property Report. The written documentation resulting from a survey of each structure and the individual occupancies within each structure on a property. A property report, at a minimum, contains one structure report and one occupancy report.

Structure. An assembly of materials forming a construction for occupancy or use for a specific purpose.

II. Use of the Forms.

The forms provided for use in the NFPA 903 system are designed to be completed as the result of a walk-through survey conducted by trained fire service personnel within a limited time frame. When properly completed, they provide a basic property inventory of the community. This walk-through survey is not a replacement for an individual fire safety engineering survey of a structure.

The Basic Property/Structure Report form is designed for recording information on a structure being surveyed and the influence that details of the structure have on fire safety. Several structures could be found on a property, and a separate Basic Property/Structure Report should be completed for each structure.

The Basic Occupancy Report form is designed for collecting information on the user occupying space within a structure and the influence the management of a business or a tenant exerts on the fire safety of that structure. A structure could contain several tenants or businesses, and a separate Basic Occupancy Report should be completed for each tenant or business.

III. Nonstructure Areas.

The forms have been designed basically for reporting the results of surveys in structures. If a fire department wishes to use the forms to record information on outdoor process or storage areas, it can do so, recognizing that some of the categories do not apply. The use of the forms for this purpose does, however, provide a more complete report of the property and its use. Such use is recommended if the process or storage area has appreciable value.

IV. Form Completion.

Words should be used on report forms and should accurately describe the conditions observed. All categories should be completed on each form. The abbreviation "N/A" should be used for categories that are not applicable, and the word "none" should be used to indicate the absence of some feature. Where information cannot be obtained, the abbreviation "undet" (undetermined) should be used.

This guide contains appropriate references to NFPA 901, *Standard Classifications for Incident Reporting and Fire Protection Data*, for use by personnel responsible for classifying data. All references cite the 1995 edition of NFPA 901. A review of the discussion, terminology, definitions, and classifications in NFPA 901 can improve the quality of the reports.

Where a category has an associated classification system, a space has been provided to record the classification number. Where the format of the data allows for direct entry (e.g., dates, times, and numeric data), persons using the form in connection with electronic data entry can create specific spaces or a special format for recording such data to aid in its transfer to electronic media.

V. Reporting Each Property.

The proper use of these report forms provides an inventory of the property a fire department is expected to protect. Properties on which there is only one structure with a single, specific property use or occupancy are quite easy to assess, and completion of a property inventory report is simple (i.e., one Basic Property/Structure Report form and one Basic Occupancy Report form). Most communities include some complex properties with a number of structures and a variety of specific property uses or occupancies, which results in the need to use several Basic Property/Structure Report forms and several Basic Occupancy Report forms. Responsibility for fire protection is then divided between the owner in some areas and a tenant in other areas.

VI. Initial Survey.

The initial survey should be used to complete the Basic Property/Structure Report, Form 903SR, and the appropriate number of Basic Occupancy Reports, Form 903TR.

VII. Evaluation Frequency.

It is necessary to review and update the property report periodically. This should be done at least annually. A copy of the property report should be taken on each inspection of the property and any changes noted. An updated report should be filed as necessary.

VIII. Additional Materials.

It might be desirable in some cases to include additional comments, sketches, and photographs with the report. The same property number, structure number, and occupancy number, if applicable, should appear on all such documents.

Examples

The first two forms, on pages 6 and 7, demonstrate how a properly completed report should look for a one-story, 50-ft ×

75-ft (15-m × 23-m) building occupied as a fast food restaurant.

The next five forms (pages 8–12) show how a properly completed report should look for an industrial property consisting of a two-story office building and a one-story furniture plant and storage building with the plant and storage area separated by a fire division wall with protected openings.

Preparation of the Basic Property/Structure Report

The Basic Property/Structure Report, Form 903SR, is shown on page 13. The section of this guide to be used as a reference in preparing the Basic Property/Structure Report follows the form.

All information recorded on the survey should pertain strictly to the structure itself. Information on tenants or businesses housed in the structure should be recorded separately using Basic Occupancy Reports.

The report should be completed in the words of the member making the report. Reference should be made to the explanatory information regarding Lines SA through SU as well as to other explanatory information in the guide. Additional remarks on unique or interesting features of the survey are requested. Any remarks pertaining to a specific item on the form should be preceded by the letter of the line that provides information on that specific item.

Preparation of the Basic Occupancy Report

The Basic Occupancy Report, Form 903TR, is shown on page 21. The section of this guide to be used as a reference in preparing the Basic Occupancy Report follows the form.

All information recorded on the survey should pertain strictly to the tenant or business and the space the tenant or business occupies. Information on the structure itself should be recorded on the Basic Property/Structure Report, and information on other tenants or businesses should be recorded on separate Basic Occupancy Reports.

The report should be completed in the words of the member making the report. Reference should be made to the explanatory information regarding Lines TA through TO as well as to other explanatory information in this guide. Additional remarks on unique or interesting features of the survey are requested. Any remarks pertaining to a specific item on the form should be preceded by the letter of the line that provides information on that specific item.