

# Comprehensive Report: Water Demand and Disadvantages of Partially Protected Fire Protection Systems in Industrial Premises

**Date:** 14/10/2024

**Venue:** Chennai

## Introduction

Fire protection systems are critical in safeguarding industrial premises from fire-related hazards, ensuring the safety of personnel, protecting assets, and maintaining business continuity. However, the type of fire protection system installed—whether **partially protected** or **fully protected**—has significant implications for fire safety, water demand during fire incidents, and overall risk management.

This report explores the disadvantages of partially protected fire protection systems in industrial settings, focusing on water demand during fire incidents and other risks associated with limited coverage.

## Overview of Partially Protected Fire Protection Systems

A **partially protected fire protection system** covers only specific areas of an industrial premises, such as high-risk zones (e.g., storage rooms, machinery areas, or hazardous material sites), leaving other parts of the facility either unprotected or minimally protected. These systems are typically installed where fire risk is deemed

highest, and areas considered low-risk may lack any fire suppression measures. While this approach may reduce initial costs, it introduces several risks, particularly in industrial environments where fire hazards are often dynamic and interconnected.

In contrast, a **fully protected fire protection system** provides comprehensive fire safety coverage across the entire premises, including active fire suppression (e.g., sprinklers, fire alarms) and passive protection (e.g., fire-resistant walls, doors, and escape routes).

## Disadvantages of Partially Protected Fire Protection Systems in Industrial Premises

### Limited Coverage and Fire Spread

One of the most significant drawbacks of partially protected fire systems is the **limited coverage**. Fire protection is focused on certain areas, leaving large portions of the premises vulnerable. In an industrial setting, where fire risks can emerge unpredictably, the unprotected zones are at a higher risk of fire spread. Without fire suppression systems in these areas, a small fire can grow rapidly, spreading to critical zones and causing extensive damage.

- **Uncontrolled Fire Spread:** Fires in unprotected areas can spread to protected zones, overwhelming the fire protection system.
- **Higher Risk to Personnel:** Unprotected areas complicate evacuation procedures and expose workers to increased danger during fire incidents.

### Increased Property and Equipment Damage

Fires in unprotected zones can cause significant damage to industrial assets, such as machinery, raw materials, and finished products. Without immediate fire suppression, the fire can grow before it is detected, leading to **greater financial losses**.

- **Delayed Fire Detection:** Unprotected areas are often slower to detect fires, which increases the risk of damage.
- **Higher Recovery Costs:** More extensive repairs and longer production downtime are common when fires occur in unprotected zones, impacting business continuity.

## Non-Compliance with Fire Safety Regulations

Partially protected fire protection systems may fail to meet the fire safety standards required by local and international regulations. This can lead to:

- **Legal and Regulatory Penalties:** Non-compliance with fire safety codes may result in fines, operational shutdowns, or challenges in obtaining insurance.
- **Insurance Issues:** Industrial insurers often require comprehensive fire protection. Partially protected systems can lead to higher insurance premiums or even refusal of coverage.

## Higher Long-Term Costs

While partially protected systems may reduce upfront installation costs, they can incur higher long-term expenses due to:

- **Frequent System Upgrades:** As fire safety regulations evolve, the system may need regular retrofitting to expand coverage and meet updated requirements.
- **Costly Fire Damage:** Fires in unprotected areas can cause extensive damage, resulting in high repair and replacement costs.

## Limited Flexibility for Future Expansion

In dynamic industrial environments, operations may change or expand over time, increasing fire risks in areas that were initially considered low-risk. Partially protected systems offer limited scalability, making it difficult to adjust protection levels as the facility grows. Expanding a partially protected system can be costly and complex compared to installing a fully protected system from the outset.

## Water Demand in Partially Protected Fire Protection Systems

The water demand during a fire incident in a partially protected fire protection system can present significant challenges, particularly in an industrial setting where the fire risk is high. The water supply may be inadequate or improperly distributed, especially in unprotected areas. Key considerations include:

### Limited Water Supply to Unprotected Zones

Water-based fire suppression systems (e.g., sprinklers) are often only installed in specific areas in a partially protected system. When a fire breaks out in an unprotected zone:

- **Delayed Fire Response:** Water may not be immediately available, leading to greater fire spread before firefighting efforts can begin.
- **Higher Water Demand:** The fire may grow larger before suppression can begin, requiring higher volumes of water to control it.

### Inconsistent Water Pressure

The water infrastructure in partially protected systems is typically designed based on the expected demand in the covered areas, not for the entire premises. In case of a fire in unprotected areas:

- **Reduced Water Pressure:** Water pressure may drop if the demand exceeds what the system was designed to handle, making it harder to suppress fires effectively.
- **Strained Water Supply:** If the fire spreads into both protected and unprotected areas, the water supply system may become overwhelmed, further delaying firefighting efforts.

### Dependence on External Firefighting Resources

In many cases, unprotected areas rely on manual firefighting systems, such as fire hoses or external fire department intervention. This can increase water demand significantly:

- **Manual Intervention:** Without automatic sprinkler systems, fires in unprotected areas require manual intervention with fire hoses, which typically demand much higher water flow rates (up to 1,000 gallons per minute).
- **External Firefighter Response:** Industrial facilities may rely on external firefighting teams, who may need to bring additional water resources to the site. This can cause delays in fire suppression, allowing the fire to grow and increasing overall water demand.

## **Overload of Water Infrastructure**

During a fire in unprotected areas, the existing water supply infrastructure may not be able to keep up with the increased water demand, particularly if the system was not designed for extensive fires. This can lead to:

- **Overloaded Pumps:** Water pumps and tanks may not have the capacity to provide adequate water for both protected and unprotected zones simultaneously.
- **Higher Damage Levels:** Due to delayed suppression and inadequate water supply, fires can cause more extensive damage, requiring larger amounts of water to eventually control the fire.

## **Conclusion**

Partially protected fire protection systems offer limited fire safety coverage and can introduce significant risks, particularly in industrial premises where fire hazards are unpredictable. The disadvantages include gaps in fire protection, non-compliance with regulations, increased risk to personnel, and higher potential for property damage. Additionally, water demand during fire incidents can be much higher in unprotected areas, leading to challenges in controlling fires and potential overload of the water supply infrastructure.

For industrial facilities, where safety and continuity are paramount, fully protected fire protection systems provide more comprehensive coverage, reducing fire-related risks and ensuring that water demand is managed effectively during fire incidents.

Despite the higher initial investment, fully protected systems are more cost-effective in the long run and offer better protection for both people and assets.

### **Recommendation:**

**For Industrial premises with significant fire hazards, it is advisable to implement fully protected fire protection systems to ensure complete safety, regulatory compliance and minimized fire-related risks.**



**Thank you!**

