

NFPA 72 and Sound Masking: Fact and Fiction

Lencore has recently released [a white paper](#) that insinuates that sound masking systems need to meet UL 2572 certification, a certification they have recently received for their mass notification system (MNS). In order to boost sales for both their sound masking and MNS, they are trying to suggest that sound masking and mass notification standards are somehow connected. They are not.

First, NFPA is the acronym for the National Fire Protection Association, not “Agency” as misquoted in Lencore’s “4 Key Selection Criteria for Mass Notification Systems.” Additionally, NFPA 72 is NOT a design standard. Therefore, Lencore cannot meet the “design intent” of NFPA 72, but only comply with all of the UL requirements for an MNS control unit (which has nothing to do with sound masking other than to turn off the sound masking when the MNS is a combination control like Lencore’s.)

Under the “Reporting” section of the 4 Key Selection Criteria for Mass Notification Systems,” it is clear that Lencore does not understand the NFPA 72 requirements for monitoring the integrity of the control panel. “Reactive reporting” is not defined in nor does it exist in the Code. It is also unclear how they would determine “potential future failures”.

Lencore both misquotes and misrepresents the *National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code*®, NFPA 72 mass notification system (MNS) requirements in their White Paper entitled “Know the Code: Sound Masking and NFPA 72”. It is not clear which edition of the Code Lencore is attempting to use but regardless, there is nothing that indicates in the deliberations or publication of the Code that the Technical Committee contemplated a sound masking system needs to be listed for MNS through the UL requirements of UL 2572.

Below are some further fact checks:

Lencore claim: *Sound masking systems installed in mid- to large-sized projects where NFPA 72 is enforced must be UL Certified by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL).*

Fact check: False. Firstly, NFPA 72 is a Code that is enforced for all fire alarm and emergency communications systems, not just in “mid- to large-sized projects.” And sound masking systems are not required to be Listed (UL does not “certify”) to UL 2572 unless the entire emergency communication system (that may include sound masking and is therefore described as a combination control) is to be used for a mass notification system.

Lencore claim: *The reasoning behind this requirement is sound masking systems impede on the annunciation of emergency communications systems.*

Fact check: False. As we know the decibel level of sound masking is not loud enough to interfere with mass notification broadcasts. Even if it were, QtPro and DynasoundPro sound masking systems have a contact closure that shuts the sound masking down in the event of an emergency.

Lencore claim: *UL 2572 and ULC-S576 are the US and Canadian testing standards, respectively, for approved equipment performance in mass notification systems.*

Fact check: Deliberately misleading. Neither of these standards require a sound masking system to be UL Listed. UL 2572 is required for **mass notification systems, not for sound masking systems.**

Lencore claim: *In order to certify that a system can perform the sound masking shutdown sequence requirement, the system control panel interfacing with the Fire Alarm Control Panel (FACP) must pass UL 2572 and/or ULC-S576.*

Fact check: False. NFPA does not require system to be listed unless the control panel is to serve as an MNS or if the sound masking system is part of a combination control panel. When interfaced with any communication system that uses sound masking, NFPA 72 allows for multiple methods for the fire alarm system to shut down the sound masking component (only if it would interfere with communications). Once again, UL 2572 is required for **mass notification systems, not for sound masking systems.**

The remainder of the white paper goes to great lengths to try to suggest that any sound masking system is necessarily a combination system of the emergency notification system. This statement is categorically false and only applies to Lencore's own system! They also quote Annex material which is unenforceable under the Code.

The real facts:

- Cambridge Sound Management is the number one manufacturer of sound masking solutions, trusted by over 20,000 customers and over half of Fortune 100 companies
- We have the largest network of Certified Sound Masking installers – professionally trained to ensure installations are completed with quality and care
- We are voted the #1 sound masking provider by both end users and installers
- We only sell sound masking – and we have the widest range of sound masking solutions suitable for any specification or acoustical challenge