

*Decommissioning your data center can become an unexpected and significant cost. Not addressing your fire protection system can result in safety risks and unplanned expenses.*

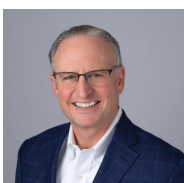
Almost all data centers have a fire detection and suppression system that is separate from the building's system. Vacating a data center results in the space being repurposed for another use and **in most cases that will require a change to the existing fire protection system**. Here are some aspects to consider.

**Determine requirements in detail.** If your data center is being converted back to office space, generally it will have to match the fire protection design for the office. Therefore, gaseous suppression agent tanks would have to be removed and likely all of the piping in the ceiling and under the raised floor, if applicable. For pre-action sprinkler systems they may have to be converted back to a "wet" system. The data center detection system would likely also have to be removed. If that is the case, the building fire alarm system would have to be re-programmed and possibly additional devices added to the former data center space.

**Get required input.** Of vital importance is to understand the requirements from your local Fire Marshal (AHJ – Authority Having Jurisdiction). While they cannot overrule code, they have considerable flexibility to interpret it and that might be different than what your fire protection contract has told you. If you are in a leased building, make sure that your Property Manager signs off on the changes you are making. Maybe the PM will have additional requirements. (See [Data Center Decommissioning Series: Leased Building Location](#)) Finally, if your insurance carrier has fire protection guidelines, check in with them.

**Leverage your fire protection contractor and engineer.** Defining an optimal course of action and getting all the proper input takes time and expertise. Likely, you have a longstanding relationship with your fire protection contractor (FPC). They know your system well and can devise alternatives that will reduce risk and cost. Additionally, they also have relationships with Fire Marshals and can act as your advocate. Start working with your contractor and engineer early and define the acceptable options and their associated costs. Determine whether a fire watch will be required during the transition. Prioritize them and together plan your approach to the various parties that will dictate what is required. Changes will have to be designed, as-builts will need to be updated and incorporated into the building drawings.

**Understand timing and sequence.** Your fire protection system will be one of the last things to be decommissioned. Of course, your IT assets have to be out, but there is always some IT infrastructure that will not be moving. There will be logistics for certified data erasure, hard drive destruction, and equipment recycling. There will be the removing of data center support equipment – UPS, CRACs, etc. Inquire with your Fire Marshal about the sequence. Also, since there will be changes to the building system, testing of the changes will need to be reviewed and witnessed. For additional discussion see [Data Center Decommissioning Series: Your Project Plan](#).



#### About the Author

Tad Davies is a 33-year veteran of the data center industry. He advises clients nationally on Business Centric strategy issues such as consolidation, provider selection, and build vs. buy and Facility Centric strategy issues such as risk assessment, conceptual planning, and owner's representation. Tad is President of Fodere which provides data center guidance. [Tad.davies@FodereConsulting.com](mailto:Tad.davies@FodereConsulting.com) [www.FodereConsulting.com](http://www.FodereConsulting.com)