



## F E D O T N E W S L E T T E R

FEBRUARY, 2007

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

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### SOME THOUGHTS ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING

And away we go; I predicted that one day we would run into a situation in Texas where the marketplace would be out of sync with the Licensing Rules that are enforced by the SFMO. In fact both the extinguisher and alarm licensing Rules may be out of sync at this time and hopefully this article will help you understand where we are today and hopefully help you pick a direction for where you think we should be in the future.

The latest 2007 Edition of NFPA 10 accepts electronic monitoring of fire extinguishers and when used the requirement for monthly inspection and annual extinguisher maintenance is modified. Let the record reflect that I am not in agreement with this position but the intent of this story is to take the discussion in a different direction.

As I understand our current licensing rules it may be necessary to have multiple licenses to do extinguisher work if electronically monitored extinguishers are involved. As I read and understand the Rules today we only need to have a B-Type License and be employed by a firm with a proper ECR number to service or install a fire extinguisher. However if the extinguisher is electronic monitored it may be necessary to also have the appropriate alarm license and your employer may need to have an ACR number and that is only for maintenance. Installing of a new extinguisher may require an Alarm Superintendents License to locate the device, do the

stand-by power calculations and oversee the installation, these are the questions needed to be addressed.

What is electronic monitoring as we know it today? An extinguisher can be factory fitted (in order to maintain it UL Listing) with a special gauge. As I understand the gauge creates an electronic interface with a fire alarm panel to monitor a decrease in gauge pressure and to monitor physical movement and scan for any obstruction. This new and interesting technology is being actively promoted so I think this is the start of more electronics in the extinguisher business. I believe at this time there is only one manufacturer of an electronic interface gauge and I am told that currently only one extinguisher manufacturer is making their product available with this monitoring gauge/device.

I would like to think that the SFMO will address this situation in a timely manner. Electronic monitoring is allowed now so a timely manner is now. I am not aware that either the Fire Extinguisher Advisory Council or the Fire Alarm Advisory Council is scheduled to meet or is even focusing on this issue. This needs to be addressed so we can determine our direction and be correct with the SFMO licensing requirements in the future. It all starts with a clearer understanding of what is happening in the marketplace so you can form a proper opinion on where you stand on this subject.

### COME VISIT THE FORT WORTH STOCKYARDS AND STAY FOR THE ANNUAL FEDOT MEETING

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Phil Foster your FEDOT Vice President we have secured a great venue for our Annual FEDOT Business Meeting. Phil has negotiated a reasonable meeting room rental rate at the historic Stockyards Hotel. Back in the days of the Chisholm Trail cattle had to be driven to Kansas to meet the available rail head for shipment to slaughtering facilities in Chicago and further East Coast population centers. The Chisholm Trail actually started in Fort Worth. In later years as the railroads grew and refrigeration or icing was available in Texas the stockyard facility evolved into a place where millions of head of livestock

were sold, shipped or slaughtered. Today the remnant of those past years has been preserved and has been turned into a great travel destination. There are hotels, dining, shopping and enough history to satisfy everyone. The tourist steam train is still turned on a manual turntable and Longhorn cattle are driven down the brick street in front of our host hotel every afternoon. This part of our Texas history is on display everyday. So come for the Stockyard experience and stay for the FEDOT meeting or come to the annual meeting and bring the family for a living history lesson.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

As the Editor of the FEDOT Newsletter I have been asked by our President; Jim Shelton to assist him with the President's column. Jim is recovering from micro-back surgery and is just back in his office but is using a walker to get around. Micro surgery sounds minor but I am told this was really some major league surgery that used micro tools and techniques. Without sounding like a surgeon, Jim has likely experienced the major part of the pain and is on the rebound. Hopefully he will be able to travel to Fort Worth on March 27, 2007 for our annual FEDOT meeting.

Here is what he asked me to communicate to the membership. The state of the Association is good. We have an excellent team of officers that have soldiered on in his absence. The organization can always be improved; especially with the help of good members; but we are on track and are serving every member's needs at this time.

This year in Fort Worth we will spend a significant part of the meeting discussing Portable Extinguishers. There are significant changes in NFPA 10, 2007 Edition. Some are potentially controversial and should prove interesting to every member.

Now is an excellent time to be involved with FEDOT.

We will also be voting for a new vice president and secretary. Every organization needs good leadership and that generally comes through the group that you elect as your officers. The FEDOT By-laws call for all officer terms to be for two years and for two of the four officer positions to be voted on each year. So be prepared this year to vote for the two open positions of VP and Secretary.

The rest of the leadership comes from the past Presidents which include Larry Angle, current NAFED President, and David Mettauer, NAFED Region 5 Director and FEDOT Treasurer. We have excellent depth at all positions and we are poised to continue to soldier on to serve all of the needs of our members.

In summary I was asked to let everyone know that FEDOT is healthy, is fiscally sound and is in the capable hands of a quality team of officers. And now would be an excellent time to thank them for being there while Jim was out of pocket.

**JAN 30, 2007  
MAN SEVERELY BURNED AFTER  
EXTINGUISHER DEVICE  
EXPLODES IN FRYER**

**The Associated Press**

HOLYOKE, Mass.— A maintenance worker was severely burned Tuesday when a piece of a fire extinguisher he was changing at a McDonald's restaurant accidentally fell into a scalding fryer and exploded.

The man, who authorities did not identify, was taken to Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.

Holyoke Fire Deputy Chief Tim Nelson said the man, who works for Fire Control Systems of Agawam, dropped a carbon dioxide cylinder as he was changing it. The device bounced and fell into the fryer.

The man tried to fish the extinguisher out of the fryer when it blew up, spraying hot oil on him.

"We're talking about a couple hundred degrees," Nelson said of the oil's temperature. "It's a freak accident. You'd never think in a thousand years that something like that could happen."

The accident also slightly burned two McDonald employees who were treated at local hospitals and released.

**STOCKYARDS HOTEL**

Colonel Thomas Thannisch of the Confederate Army built the Stockyards Hotel in 1907. It was enlarged to its current size in 1913 and quickly became a "home away from home" for businessmen and ranchers participating in the booming livestock market, as well as visitors and rodeo competitors going to the nearby Cowtown Coliseum with the first Fat Stock Show in 1896.

The infamous bank robbers, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, hid out at the Stockyards Hotel in 1933 while being chased by the law. Bonnie and Clyde checked into what is now Room 305, which overlooks Main Street and Exchange Avenue and provided an excellent lookout point.

Booger Red's Saloon was named after a well-known rodeo rider of the day, named Red Privett. His flaming red hair gave him the name of "Red", but after an explosion of gun powder blew up in his face, it was said that Red was "all boogered up", thus giving him the name of "Booger Red".

Completely restored in 1984 to its original western elegance, the Stockyards Hotel of today reflects a proud heritage and provides guests with the feel of the Old West.

**VENDORS SHOW THEIR  
GENEROSITY**

The Annual Meeting will be held in the historic Stockyards in Fort Worth on March 24, 2007. Typically in past years we have sold Vendor space for our Spring Meeting as a way to help offset some of the costs for the Annual meeting room and other meeting expenses. This year we have worked out an arrangement with those same generous vendors to pay for lunch and refreshments at the Annual FEDOT Meeting. We will be charging \$5.00 per person to attend this meeting. So plan now to attend the FEDOT Annual Meeting at the Stockyards Hotel in Fort Worth and take advantage of their generosity. There will be NO acceptable reason why you do not attend this meeting and take in the historic significance of a great travel destination. Let's hope our Annual Meeting will one day have historic significance.

**WE OWE YOU AN APOLOGY;  
EDITOR**

There was a printing mistake made in the September 2006 issue of the FEDOT Newsletter. We ran a cover story about UL-300 that was to be continued on the second page. One version has the continuation of the story on page two and the other does not. The electronic version which appears on the FEDOT web-site is complete, where as the printed copy that is mailed to all members is incomplete.

We apologize for this error; in fact the printer who is responsible has agreed to discount the cost of printing this issue as a way of acknowledging their error and as a method to compensate FEDOT for their mistake.

Please go to the FEDOT website to get the version that is complete and enjoy the article in its fullness. Again we are sorry for this error. Editor

**Next FEDOT Meeting is March 24, 2007**

**Stockyard Hotel 109 East Exchange Ave. Ft. Worth, TX 76106**

**THE SPIANS WANTED**

We are looking for three individuals that would be willing to present a skit at an upcoming FEDOT meeting. As everyone knows we all are responsible to be properly trained to ship or transport Hazardous Materials. There are several excellent sources for this training including the NAFED train the Trainer program and the J.J. Keller program. I have attended both programs and each time I have been rewarded for my time spent by learning some valuable information. However I think the program can be streamlined if it is taught specifically by fire equipment people, for other fire equipment people with a total emphasis on the products we use every day in this business. I think a practical picture will be priceless.

I see a couple of willing actors loading a service truck and filling out the proper documents to the satisfaction of a supervisor. I also see another actor conducting a DOT inspection. And I see a shipment being prepared for pick-up by a common carrier and completing the paperwork to the satisfaction of the truck driver. I also see those same actors being willing to meet, write a script and rehearse so that they can produce a quality skit. Then I see these creative individuals presenting a skit at an upcoming FEDOT meeting to the rich applause of a grateful audience.

Seriously; FEDOT is always searching for informative programs. If you have a thespians heart, volunteer for this challenging assignment. Your fellow members will for ever be grateful. Contact any elected officer to express your willingness to serve.

**“It’s easy to make a buck.  
It’s a lot tougher to make  
a difference.”**

**Tom Brokaw**

**THERE IS A TOOL FOR  
EVERY JOB**

That was one of my Dad’s all time favorite sayings. He actually said it a lot because he had to. I cannot count the times he caught me using a screwdriver as a pry bar or pair of pliers when a box end wrench would be the tool a “real craftsman would use”. After a recent new tool discovery I really believe he was right--there is a tool for every job.

Recently one of my Technicians discovered a uniquely shaped pair of needle nose pliers while shopping at a new Northern Tool Company Store. If you do not have one of these stores in your area I know they have a catalog and a website and I would assume they can handle your purchases directly.

He found a tool that works well with both Amerex and Ansul Scissor brackets. Please see the pictures below. These needle nose pliers can squeeze the scissors while installing the link, will stay in place if you let go, are bent at an angle so your hand does not hit the hood etc. etc. And here is the best part we paid full retail price (less than \$6.00). They likely are not Snap-on quality but our usage won’t be that extreme so I doubt we will ever break them or bend them out of alignment. Definitely worth the price we paid.

**I LEARN SOMETHING NEW  
EVERYDAY  
(OR MY MEMORY IS REFRESHED)**

Amerex recently released a Product Advisory Update (postmarked 12-28-2006) that deals with the replacement of the siphon tube and valve stem on certain KP-375 Cylinders (manufactured January 1996 through December 2003). You need to be aware of this Advisory and to follow it exactly to insure the proper performance of your customer’s KP-375 Cylinder.

The intent of this story is to tell you what I learned as I read this Amerex Advisory. The following is quoted directly from the second paragraph: **“While this situation should be discovered during the piping integrity test that is required by NFPA 17A, Amerex will endeavor to solve the problem”.**

I was curious; what does NFPA 17A say about piping integrity? So I went to the 2002 Edition for this information.

**7.3.2.1 Maintenance shall include the following:**

**(3)\* Verification that the agent distribution piping is not obstructed.**

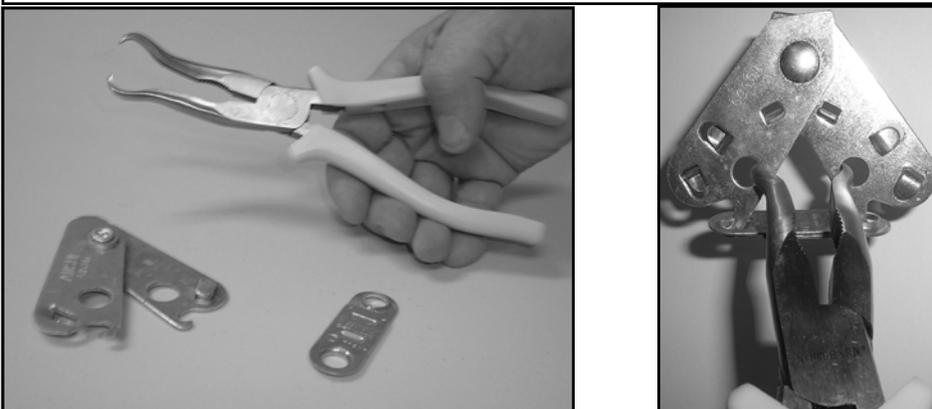
**A.7.3.2.1 (3) The following methods can be used to verify that all piping is not obstructed:**

- (1) Disassembly of all piping**
- (2) Conducting a full or partial discharge test**
- (3) Utilizing other methods recommended by the manufacturer**

I knew that there was a requirement to check piping when starting up a new Fire System and that most contractors include checking the piping as a part of a semi-annual maintenance procedure. I was struck by the wording and began to think about how a good lawyer that represented the plaintiff in a law suit might be able to manipulate those lines into an advantage for his client against a defendant like any average fire equipment distributor (maintenance contractor). It sent a chilling tingle down my backbone and made me refocus on the necessity to do good work and to instill the need to do so with every technician and installer.

The above is presented as food for thought. It is not my intent to tell you how to run your service business but is my purpose to get you to think about it.

**Recently one of my Technicians discovered a uniquely shaped pair of needle nose pliers that works well with both Amerex and Ansul Scissor brackets.**



## UPDATE ON THE STATION FIRE TRAGEDY BY PHIL FOSTER

We received the invitation during the first week of the year. It came from the NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology), division of the Department of Commerce. They were conducting a workshop on fire extinguishers in nightclubs based on their investigation of the "Station" nightclub fire. Invitations went to just about anyone who is a part of a fire prevention organization. The following were all represented at the meeting: OSHA, NFPA, NAFED, ICC, CCI, BOMA, GSA, Underwriters Laboratories, Dept. of Homeland Security, International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), International Association of Firefighters, National Restaurant Association, FEMA, Mark Redlitz representing National Association of Fire Marshals (NASFM), and FEDOT. FEDOT was the only state organization represented at the meeting. You may remember this fire from news accounts. Due to the rapid escalation of the fire and overcrowding in the building, approximately 110 people perished. The fire was started by the use of pyrotechnics in a band's stage performance.

The NIST conducted an exhaustive investigation of this fire for over a year. I was extremely impressed that they were sharing their findings and genuinely seeking input from the industry to develop opinions on what can be done to prevent this type of tragedy in the future.

The meeting lasted all day, January 17<sup>th</sup>. The NIST team, headed by Bill Grosshandler, shared with us their entire investigation, including the re-creation of the fire. The building was fully involved and filled with smoke in 90 seconds. Even though the fire department responded in just over 2 minutes, the people trapped in the building never had a chance. There appeared to be no enforcement of NFPA 1126 which was the major reason for the tragedy.

After many hours of discussion at the meeting, Bill asked all in attendance to send him a follow-up letter with overview and thoughts that came to mind after the close. I have enclosed a copy of the letter that I sent to Bill per his request.

In closing, I will tell you that I am extremely impressed with the work being done by the NIST in their fire lab. It is so nice to see taxpayer dollars doing something that we can all feel good about!

Bill Grosshandler  
United States Department of Commerce  
National Institute of Standards and Technology  
100 Bureau Drive, MS8663  
Gaithersburg, MD 20899-8663  
Hello Bill,

Thank you again for the invitation that you extended to us at FEDOT ( Fire Equipment Distributors of Texas ) to be a part of your workshop on portable fire extinguishers for nightclubs. We are delighted to be a part of the process of improving our knowledge of and response to fire related life safety issues.

Per your request I am sending to you some overview and thoughts that came to mind during discussions after the close of the meeting.

1. Fires such as the "Station" fire where so much was done wrong or not done at all, and where the resultant tragedy is so catastrophic are virtually impossible to eradicate without overburdening the marketplace with cost and restrictions. It would seem similar to being totally prepared for a hurricane the likes of Katrina.
2. I think that rather than classifying these hazards by business type we have to get our arms around a method of classifying them by occupancy number. The real problem in these types of fires seems to be less about the type of business and more about the number of people who have to escape in a very short time frame.
3. I think, as was suggested in the meeting, that we need to further analyze and classify new types of materials that are being used for displays and backdrops in these types of venues, as many of them are much more flammable and emit more caustic, toxic, thick smoke than materials typically used in the past.
4. Last but not least, it should be noted that NFPA 1126 is a lengthy list of standards regarding the indoor use of pyrotechnics for entertainment venues. In this case it appears none were applied or enforced by the local authority. The point is that no amount of standards or rules will ever be any more effective than the ability of the local authority to police and enforce them. That being said, the best line of defense may be to require the use of an automatic suppression system which would be much easier to police and work even in the absence of trained personnel.

Bill I am most impressed with the work that you and your team are doing. I am also pleased that we here at FEDOT can be a small part of that work.

Best Regards, Phil Foster  
Vice President Fire Equipment Distributors

### CREDIT CARD SCAM ALERT

Several FEDOT Member Companies have reported contact with customers that appear to be running a credit card scam. There was also a warning in a recent NAFED publication alerting everyone to the same scam. Some of the customer contacts start with a relay telephone call which likely indicates the request is from another country. Other requests come directly by phone or fax from a prospective customer. If you actually quote a price you will likely get a Purchase Order in less than one hour. My first red flag started flapping when I got acceptance of my +\$10,000.00 bid in less than one hour. If business were that easy I would only open for business when I needed a little cash. Most of the requests are for large quantities of one item. One report I heard was for 200 Smoke Detectors and another was for 100 Fire Extinguishers. All orders are for shipment to a freight forwarder's address and payment is by multiple credit cards usually with consecutive numbers. I actually phoned my credit card system processor to validate these card numbers and was given the telephone number of the issuing bank. I called them and was told that the ship to address did not match the card holder's address but that the cards were valid. I scratched real hard for an explanation and all I could confirm from the issuing bank was that even if the funds transferred into your account if the action is proven later to be fraudulent they have the right to remove the funds from your account. What I think that means is that long after the event is complete you can be back charged and you never will be able to recover your product or equipment. I am still unclear where there is a profit for the "customer" that is running this scam. There certainly is no e-bay market for extinguishers or smoke detectors so they must have a way of getting a cash refund from the credit card company. It makes no sense but I am sure if you follow through, sell the products and expect to get cash from the credit card company and get to keep that cash you are more than lucky. I think it is a scam and I did not follow through with this order. I am not aware of any one that actually completed a credit card transaction and shipped any product.

**SHOULD TRAINING BE FREE ..... THE COST OF TRAINING**

January seems to be the month that several manufacturers have set aside for field training or the month to announce their 2007 Training Schedule. Several manufacturers are charging for these training programs. Several Distributor Companies have expressed concern to me regarding the concept of charging and as can be expected I have only heard from those that are not happy. This is the reason I decided to write this story at this time.

First lets please all agree that manufacturers have costs associated with training. There surely is a cost for manuals and other hand out materials, meeting rooms, food and refreshments, travel and lodging etc. and these costs must be covered. Some of these costs are variable costs; that is they are based on the actual number of attendees while others expenses fall into a class called fixed costs because the entire room must be rented and the plane ticket purchased regardless of how many students attend. Also any scheduled training must go on regardless of the weather or any other extreme event.

Distributors have cost as well and it is not my intent to not recognize that as a fact. Wages generally are paid during training as

well as insurance, workers comp and vehicle expenses. If a distributor must travel his people for training there can be a considerable expense for transportation, food and lodging. The biggest expense to a distributor though is in lost revenue. If technicians are not writing Invoices it can get expensive real fast. And in a worse case scenario a customer can be lost to a competitor because a distributor cannot respond in a timely manner because his people are away from training.

So now that we agree that there are associated expenses; what is the best way to recover these costs? There are actually three options. 1. The manufacturer can not ok charge and instead bury this cost in the price of their products. 2. Or they can pass along the costs for training by charging a fee that matches the cost of training. 3. The last option is something between the other two options such as charge a moderate (small) fee based on some workable calculation.

I don't have the answer and if I did it would not be my place to give it to you because who am I to tell everyone how to run their businesses? And I am wise enough to know that one answer will likely not satisfy everyone. We live in a free market society.

That means that is incumbent on the market to dictate our response. If attendance is in line with projections then manufacturers will continue to cover their costs by charging for training. If attendance declines or a lot of grumbling is heard then changes may be warranted.

I have also heard that training has been turned into a profit center. Again the conditions in the market should take effect. If too many challenge the profit center concept and they are correct and it impacts attendance then changes will be expected. If on the other hand attendance stays in the range of anticipation then who are we to say that a profit is unwarranted? And since when is a profit an evil concept. If something is not profitable it tends to be left on automatic pilot and necessary changes do not occur. If it is profitable it will usually be improved over time. A case can be made on all sides of this discussion. I just think all factors need to be considered.

The market needs to work and our input and opinions are all a part of the process. As always we will publish any article or story that any manufacturer or distributor wants to write for publication here on this subject or any other subject of interest to a writer.

**PAUL JAMES COOPER**



PAUL "P.J." JAMES COOPER passed away on 1-15-2007 born 7-24-17 in Fields, La. Paul left school @ an early age to join the Civilian Conservation Corp. (CCC) to help support his family during

the depression. He moved to Houston in the early 40's where he met Grace Womack, his bride of 59 years. He and mom moved to Jacinto City where they raised their 4 sons. He worked for others for a few years and quickly tired of that. Dad started his own company, Industrial Fire Eqpt. In 1947 and remained owner and president until his retirement in 1998, when he turned it over to his sons. He remained active in the company until ill health prevented him from "going to the shop." Preceded in death by his parents Minerva & JT Cooper, and older brother Ramsey. Survived by sons, Ken and wife Sharon, Gary and wife Dixie, Doug and Jay. Grandchildren, Tiffani Miller, Resha Barber, Greg Cooper, Bridget Cooper and Leslie Cooper. Great grandchildren, Aaron & Ainslea Barber and Jackson & Katherine

Miller. Survived also by his younger sister Lucille Perry and brother Ward Cooper. Friends are invited to visit with the family from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Thurs., Jan. 18, 2007 at San Jacinto Funeral Home, 14659 I-1- East Frwy., Houston, TX. A Memorial service will be held at 10:00 a.m., Friday, Jan. 19, 2007 at San Jacinto.

**RUSSELL HALLONQUIST**

Russell Hallonquist, owner of Ameritex Fire Equipment, passed away at home on December 13, 2006. He is survived by his loving wife, Lillian "Lu"; his father and stepmom, Bobby and Theresa Hallonquist; his mother and step-dad, Doris and Cullen Thompson; sister Lisa; niece, Amanda; nephew, Nathan; grand-niece, Parys and numerous other family members and friends along with his four legged children; Racket, Penny, Rascal, Rowdy, Nickels, Bossygirl, Lucky and Wimpy. Visitation will be 9-10:30 AM Saturday at Klein Funeral Home in Magnolia with services following in the chapel at 10:30AM. Interment will be at Klein Memorial Park in Magnolia.

**WHEN AND WHERE WAS THE FIRST FIRE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZED IN THE U.S.?**

A large fire in Boston in 1679 led to the organization of the first paid fire department in America. The city imported a fire engine from England and employed a chief and twelve fire fighters. The first volunteer Fire Company was formed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1736. Benjamin Franklin served as America's first Volunteer Fire Chief.

**NFPA, 2007-BOSTON, MA**

Mark your calendars now for the upcoming Annual National Fire Protection Association Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. The event is scheduled for June 3-7, 2007. Early bird registration deadline is May 7, 2007. Visit the NFPA website at for more information and details.

## THREE FIREFIGHTERS INJURED WHILE RECHARGING A PRESSURIZED WATER EXTINGUISHER

### To:

Division of Safety Research, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

### From:

Firefighter Injury Project (FIP), New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS)

### Subject:

Three Firefighters Injured While Recharging A Pressurized Water Fire Extinguisher, Firefighter Injury Investigation #2

### Date:

May 29, 1997

### Summary

On January 7, 1997, a 28 year-old firefighter was injured when he and two co-workers charged a pressurized water fire extinguisher with air from a self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) air tank. The extinguisher exploded and the firefighter was injured when he was cut by the metal of the extinguisher. His two co-workers received minor injuries. NJDHSS Firefighter Injury Project investigators concluded that, in order to prevent similar incidents, the following safety guidelines should be followed:

- **A task hazard evaluation should be completed; policies and training should be implemented based on the findings of the hazard evaluation.**

**Fire departments should establish a standard operating procedure for safely recharging pressurized water fire extinguishers.**

### Introduction

On January 9, 1997 the NJDHSS was informed of this work-related firefighter injury by a supervisor with the NJ Department of Community Affairs, Division of Fire Safety (DFS) who also contacted the Fire Department officers to arrange a site visit. A site visit was conducted on February 4, 1997 with a representative of the NJDHSS Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Program and the DFS. The three injured firefighters were interviewed and the site of the incident observed.

The employer of the three firefighters was a paid, municipal fire department in a New

Jersey city that employed 162 persons. The department had six fire stations with six engines, three trucks, and a hazardous materials unit. The department answered approximately 5000 calls in 1996. The fire department employed a full time training officer. Firefighters, who are unionized, work rotating shifts that consist of two ten hour days, off duty for 48 hours, return for two 14 hour shifts, and then off duty for 72 hours.

The fire station to which the injured firefighters were assigned serviced a section of the city that was heavily industrialized as well as a smaller residential area. Firefighter # 1 had been on the job less than two years. Firefighter # 2 and # 3 had less than four years experience. All had been trained through a Firefighter 1 course.

### Investigation

The incident occurred on the apparatus floor of the of the fire station. The apparatus floor is the section of the fire station that houses the fire trucks (apparatus). The two bay doors were closed and the fire trucks were parked inside. The crew had started their first day shift at 8 a.m. that morning and firefighter # 1 was conducting an equipment check at 12:45 p.m.. Since he was the assigned driver, part of his job was to check the truck-mounted fire extinguisher. He noted that the indicator on the pressurized water fire extinguisher read low and informed his commanding officer, an acting lieutenant, who advised checking the pressure by attempting to spray water from the extinguisher. The water only dribbled out, indicating loss of pressure in the cylinder.

The firefighter filled the extinguisher with 2 ½ gallons of water and reassembled it. The firefighter was following the procedure he had observed and performed many times before. He obtained a SCBA air tank which had been taken out of service and no longer used for breathing air. The tank had a short air hose (approximately two feet long) connected to it that was frayed and wrapped with black tape. The firefighter connected the air hose to the valve of the extinguisher; there was no regulator on the connection between the air tank and the extinguisher. The SCBA tank may have contained more than 2000 pounds of pressure. The extinguisher, which they normally charged with about 125 pounds of pressure, was placed upright on the floor. Firefighter # 2 steadied the extinguisher while firefighter # 3 stood behind firefighter # 2. Firefighter # 1 knelt on one

knee in front of the cylinder so he could observe the gauge and opened the valve on the SCBA tank. The needle on the extinguisher didn't move (it was apparently defective). He decided to use more air and opened the valve again. On his third attempt, they saw that the gauge was moving. It was then that the extinguisher exploded with a deafening sound. The extinguisher exploded downward, splitting almost in two and mangling the metal. The plastic at its base shattered. No damage was done to any equipment or any part of the room.

### Injuries

Firefighter # 1 was wearing leather work boots and the metal cut through the leather to lacerate his foot, severing a tendon and bone. He also had lacerations to his knee. He was removed from the fire station by an ambulance and air transported to the nearest trauma center, in another city. Surgery was performed a few hours after the incident and he was hospitalized for four days. It was anticipated that he would be able to fully resume his firefighter duties within a few months of the injury. Firefighter # 2 was treated in the local hospital emergency room. He experienced ringing in his ears and a smashed finger. He returned to light duty after three weeks and his hearing was unimpaired. Firefighter # 3 was also treated for ear trauma in the local hospital emergency room. He returned to full duty three weeks after the incident.

A critical incident stress debriefing unit provided counseling to firefighters involved in the incident.

### Recommendations/Discussions

#### Recommendation #1:

**A task hazard evaluation should be completed; policies and training should be implemented based upon the findings of the hazard evaluation.**

**Discussion:** Although the department's firefighting activities have been reviewed and extensively taught, department officers should conduct a task hazard evaluation that focuses on non- firefighting jobs the firefighters are expected to do. The evaluation will be more effective if done with input from the firefighters. The task analysis should examine all areas and equipment for hazards the firefighters may encounter.

After identifying potential hazards, firefight-

*(Continued on page 7)*

### THREE FIREFIGHTERS INJURED WHILE RECHARGING A PRESSURIZED WATER EXTINGUISHER (CONTINUED)

ers should be instructed on how to correct or avoid them. Standard operating procedures should be written and firefighters trained in appropriate work practices.

#### Recommendation #2:

**Fire departments should establish a standard operating procedure for safely recharging pressurized water fire extinguishers.**

**Discussion:** The fire department did not have a standard operating procedure on how to fill and charge the extinguishers. Although the firefighters involved in this incident were not formally instructed to fill and charge the pressurized water extinguishers, they were taught on-the-job by more senior firefighters and had completed the procedure several times. The method they used was one of several that had become common practice throughout the fire department. Until 1992, the extinguishers were filled and repaired at a fire department repair facility.

The manufacturer's label on the canister did not give specific directions on how to maintain or recharge the canister but did state that the extinguisher should be recharged with 2 ½ gallons of clean water and pressurized with air to 100 psi by an authorized distributor in accordance with the service manual. The service manual, obtained from a firefighting equipment supplier, gives directions for maintenance and recharging. Included are warnings to use a regulated pressurizing source (air or nitrogen) and set the regulator no more than 25 psi higher than the gauge operating pressure. Instructions in the service manual include setting the pressure regulator to no more than 125 psi.

A few days after this incident, the department fire chief issued an order that no firefighter is to repair or refill a fire extinguisher. All extinguishers needing refilling or repair will be taken out of service and sent to an outside contractor.

It is unknown how most fire departments refill and recharge their pressurized water fire extinguishers, but a similar practice is apparently used in other fire departments. It is recommended that, for those departments that will service their own pressurized water extinguishers, a standard operating procedure should be researched and developed, based on manufacturers' recommendations, and formally taught to

all firefighters involved in this procedure.

#### Attachment

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Job Hazard Analysis 1988, (OSHA 3071)

#### Reference

National Fire Protection Association # 10, Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers, 1988.

### TECHNICAL BULLETIN #112-0303 DATE: MARCH 2003

Badger has received several requests for additional information relating to the proper pressurization of stainless steel later type fire extinguishers.

The fire equipment industry has recently begun to phase-out and eliminate the utilization of the Schrader™ style air pressurization valves on water, foam and wet chemical types of stainless steel fire extinguishers. There are several good reasons for this action, but the primary reason is for the safety of untrained personnel who might attempt to pressurize and charge them without using the proper safeguards or equipment.

The 2002 edition of the NFPA-10 portable fire extinguisher standard contains various extinguisher pressurization requirements in paragraph 6.4.4.2. This paragraph calls for the connection of the manufacturers pressurizing adapter and the utilization of only calibrated and regulated pressurization sources set no higher than 25 PSI over the intended charge pressure. NFPA specifically requires the regulated pressurization source pressure gauge to be calibrated at least annually for accuracy.

The basic rationale for the NFPA requirements is to prevent personnel from improperly pressurizing fire extinguishers, which could cause them to ultimately rupture violently.

Unfortunately, the lack of proper training and use of improper charging equipment has resulted in serious injuries when attempting to pressurize extinguishers.

To help discourage and prevent untrained personnel from utilizing improper pressurization sources (like those commonly found in vehicle service stations) the removal of the Schrader™ style air adapter from these extinguisher valves was

necessary.

Besides ensuring compliance with various safety codes, the removal of these valves also helps increase the operational reliability of these fire extinguishers. One of the most susceptible tamper points on the stainless steel (water type) fire extinguishers was the permanently installed air valve. Besides being a potential slow pressure leakage point if any contamination had accumulated on the seating surface, vandals could easily bleed down an extinguisher's operating pressure through them. Unlike the pull pin which has a visual tamper seal that breaks if tampered with, the fixed air valves installed on fire extinguishers were never able to display evidence of tampering.

The industry method preferred for pressurizing stored pressure fire extinguishers has

typically always been through the valves discharge outlet. This pressurization method passes the clean gaseous expellant charge over valve stem seating surfaces and through the siphon tube, further ensuring such areas are kept clean, clear and functional.

When desired, properly configured extinguisher pressurization sources can still utilize the same style of tank air valve Schrader™ connections to pressurize these water type extinguishers by simply adding them onto the end of the Badger charge adapter P/N-04795.

To address extinguisher hardware modifications personnel can refer to Badger technical bulletin #102 explaining various extinguisher material compatibility issues associated with the use of improper agent additives and Badger product bulletins #206 and #212 which also reference these pressurization hardware changes.

From a liability standpoint, personnel responsible for the sale, placement or distribution of life safety equipment (like fire extinguishers) within the workplace must fully consider the many negative implications associated with ignoring such common sense life safety recommendations.

For any questions or additional information please feel free to visit the Badger web site at [www.badgerfire.com](http://www.badgerfire.com) or contact Badger Technical Support at (434) 973-4361 ext. 126.

FEDOT was given permission to reprint this Badger Bulletin.



# FEDOT OBJECTIVES

1. To cooperate with local fire chiefs and other interested governmental officials in order to secure the adoption of uniform standards and ordinances governing fire equipment and uniform interpretations thereof.
2. To recommend to the fire equipment industry such trade policies and practices as will stabilize the industry and protect the public interest, to eliminate any practices which cause injury to the industry and to the public, to gather and disseminate information and ideas which will improve Texans protection against losses from fire, and to increase the professionalism of the Texas fire equipment industry. Each member of FEDOT acknowledges the ongoing responsibility implied in the sale and maintenance of fire protection equipment, and pledges to perform services with

a high standard of honesty, skill and integrity that will foster the profession of fire equipment distributors.

3. To further the joint interest of, and build good-will between, distributors, dealers and manufacturers of the fire equipment industry.
4. To gather information, statistics, and data that pertains to the fire equipment industry, and to share such information with members, governmental agencies, and interested persons.
5. To cooperate with insurance companies, governmental officials, manufacturers of fire equipment, and others who may be of assistance in furthering the purposes of FEDOT.

6. To provide a forum for the exchange of business information. (Certain information will be restricted to members)

7. To sponsor research studies and in other ways assist members in the pursuit of increased awareness and utilization of our services.
8. To promote fellowship and cooperation among fire equipment distributors in Texas.

**The objectives are also embodied within the FEDOT Code of Ethics. If you have any questions about the objectives and purposes of FEDOT, please contact us.**

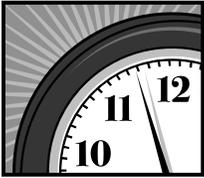
**Next Meeting: March 24, 2007 Stockyard Hotel**

**109 East Exchange Avenue Ft. Worth Texas 76106**



FIRE  
EQUIPMENT  
DISTRIBUTORS  
OF TEXAS

P O Box 790844 San Antonio, Texas 78279-0844



## MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 14, 2006 MEETING

### Minutes FEDOT Fall Annual Meeting

Location: Cabela's 15570 IH 35 Buda, TX 78610

Jim Shelton, presiding President, opened the meeting at 9:55am. He notified the attendees that Mark Redlitz was not able to attend due to a Fire Alarm Advisory Council meeting. Jim Shelton then welcomed all members to the fall FEDOT meeting.

Pete Frayer, Kimbrough Fire, explained a printing mistake in the most recent newsletter. There was a blank spot on a page where the printers accidentally messed up leaving out a section of the text.

Larry Angle, President of NAFED and FEDOT member, introduced Norb Makowka the Technical Executive Director of NAFED.

Norb Makowka presented changes in the new NFPA 10-2007. He first addressed how the NFPA committee accepts and rejects proposed changes to the standard. Norb then presented some of the changes:

- Technicians need to receive organized training.
- Technicians must be certified for servicing and maintaining fire extinguishers.
- Flammable liquid depth change.
- Additions to the obsolete fire extinguishers section.
- Definition changes for light, ordinary, and extra hazards.
- Rewording to clarify that tags should not be placed on the front of fire extinguishers.
- Electronic monitoring systems.
- Changes in monthly inspection record keeping due to electric monitoring systems.

Norb then discussed electronic monitoring device changes in the IFC 2006.

Next, Norb discussed that NAFED is collecting data through internal maintenance surveys and fire extinguisher incident reports. He stressed how few surveys are now being conducted in our industry and the importance of our collecting this data for our industry.

He then presented an exceptional NAFED AHJ training

disk with a Power Point presentation and a DVD. This disk provides abundant information to help AHJ's better understand fire extinguishers and all that we do as service companies.

Larry Angle reiterated the importance of everyone participating in the NAFED survey and reports.

Phil Foster, FEDOT Vice President, motioned to skip lunch and start the business meeting. All were in favor.

The business meeting then started.

David Mettauer, FEDOT Treasurer, gave the treasurer's report. Jim Shelton motioned to approve it. Pete Frayer seconded the motion.

Texas Construction Association minutes were approved by Jim Shelton, and seconded by Jim Hasse, FEDOT Secretary.

Phil Foster gave a talk about the importance of FEDOT to our industry and how we all need to do our part to promote FEDOT with other local fire extinguisher companies.

Larry Angle announced that the Board is always looking for interesting topics for future meetings.

Larry Angle briefly explained that NAFED has endorsed RISK Insurance, which is agent friendly.

Pete Frayer announced that FEDOT welcomes anyone to write an article for the newsletter.

Matt Dolgener, AAA Fire-Denton, asked if there was a forum on the FEDOT website. Larry responded "No," then asked David Mettauer to look into placing one.

Pete Frayer asked when we are getting a new FEDOT directory. David Mettauer said they will be ready in March, but warned all members that if they do not pay their membership dues their name will be withdrawn from the new directory.

It was asked if we have a packet for new members. Jim Hasse said we give each new member a small packet containing a directory, certificate of membership and the most recent newsletter.

Larry Angle suggested we might add information received from previous meetings.

Larry Angle motioned that we hand out the door prizes. All agreed.

A motion to adjourn the business meeting was made at 12:40pm by Jim Shelton and seconded by Phil Foster. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**DOOR PRIZES!!**



Jim Hund of Amerex donated three \$50 gift certificates for Outback Steakhouse. The following are the winners:

Leo Bray, Beck Industries, Fort Worth

Phil Foster, Beck Industries, Fort Worth

Mike Whittacre, Hopkins County Fire, Sulphur Springs

Sara Chappell of Heiser donated the following:

Heiser ladies shirt to Rob Cullen, Ace Fire Equipment, Austin

Heiser men's shirt to Jeff Kuhl, Jimmie Connolly Co., Pflugerville

Heiser mug to Steve Smith, Anchor Safety, Longview

Alan Owen of Badger donated a \$50 gift certificate for Cabela's to Paul Williams, Flame Out, Mission.

Larry Angle and Norb Makowka of NAFED donated two NAFED AHJ training disks. The following are the winners:

Travis Jolliff, Jay L. Harman Fire Equipment, El Paso

Pete Frayer, Kimbrough Fire, Arlington

**TREASURER'S REPORT**



**Beginning Balance \$6,950.52**

**Deposits:**

October 2006	\$5,736.42
November 2006	\$13,836.42
December 2006	\$15,998.42
January 2007	\$12,288.65
February 2006	\$1,500.00
<b>Total Deposits</b>	<b>\$15,348.00</b>

**Expenses:**

Misc. Meeting Expenses	\$1,296.35
Newsletter	\$954.90
TCA dues	\$3,400.00
Web Hosting	\$388.00
Office Supplies	\$750.00
Office Expenses	\$250.00

<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$7,061.87</b>
<b>Total Deposits</b>	<b>\$19,350.52</b>
<b>Total Available</b>	<b>\$12,288.65</b>
<b>Savings</b>	<b>\$4,691.68</b>

**March 24, 2007 FEDOT Spring Meeting  
Stockyards Hotel**

Admission Fee: \$5.00

Morning Meeting Room: The Cowboy

Lunch: Red River Salon

**Meal & Beverage Sponsors:**

- Amerex Corporation
- Ansul Incorporated
- Badger Fire Protection
- Brooks Equipment Co., Inc.
- Heiser Logistics

**Speakers:**

- Mark Redlitz, SFMO
- Craig Voelkert - NAFED

**Proposed Agenda:**

8:30 am	Coffee, Beverages, and Pastries
9:00 am	Meeting Begins
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:00-2:00 pm	Business Meeting

**Hotels in the Stockyards and immediate area:**

- Stockyards Hotel \$189.00 817-625-6427
- Amerisuits Stockyards \$160.00 817-626-6000
- Holiday Inn Express \$ 98.95 817-624-0303  
Loop 820 & Azle Ave.
- Motel "6" \$ 45.99 817-625-4359  
I-35 North (2 miles from Stockyards)

**Parking:**

- Valet @ Hotel \$5.00 All Day
- Self Park Across Street \$3.00 per Park

**Vender Displays:**

In the indoor patio during Breaks & Lunch

## ARE YOU READY TO VOTE?

Please review the following so that you have a current point of reference as you read the following article.

The following is copied directly out of NFPA 10 Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers, 2007 Edition.

**3.3.4\* Certified Person.** A person that has been certified by a recognized organization through a formal certification program or by an equipment manufacturer that has a certification program, that is acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

**A.3.3.4 Certified Person.** A formal certification program for portable fire extinguisher technicians normally requires the candidate to successfully pass a written examination.

One organization's certification for portable fire extinguisher technicians is based on an individual successfully completing a 150 question examination. The examination is based on this standard and includes questions from both the body and annex sections. The test bank that is used to compile each examination is comprised of over 900 questions, and the examinations are prepared using a software program that randomly assigns the questions to each exam. Therefore each exam is unique and no two exams are identical.

### 7.1.2 Personnel.

**7.1.2.1** A trained and certified person who has undergone the instructions necessary to reliably perform maintenance and has the manufacturer's service manual shall service the fire extinguishers not more than 1 year apart, as outlined in Section 7.3.

**7.1.2.2\*** Maintenance, servicing, and recharging shall be performed by trained and certified persons having available the appropriate serving manual(s), the proper types of tools, recharge materials, lubricants, and manufacturer's recommended replacement parts or parts specifically listed for use in fire extinguisher.

**7.1.2.3** The certification of personnel shall be required after February 16, 2008.

**A.7.1.2.2** A fire extinguisher servicing agency is usually the most reliable means available to the public for having maintenance and recharging performed. Large industries could find it desirable to establish their own maintenance and recharge facilities, training personnel to perform these functions. Service manuals and parts lists should be obtained from the fire extinguisher manufacturer.

Now that you are familiar with what the latest edition of NFPA states regarding certified technicians have you formed an opinion? Do you like what it says or not? Do you believe it is needed but do not think is workable as written? Are you ready to vote for your opinion? Right now the SFMO Rules have adopted by reference NFPA 10, 2002 Edition. There likely will come a day when they will meet to discuss adopt-

ing (all or in part) the 2007 Edition. You won't get a paper ballot and no real vote will be taken but your opinion will be valuable. Even though you won't vote there is a process that the SFMO goes through to change the current Fire Extinguisher Rules. If you have an opinion and I hope you do, are you ready to participate in the process?

The process for adopting the 2007 Edition (actually any Rule changes) works like this. The Advisory Council and the SFMO agree to schedule a public meeting because there is one or more good reason to hold such a meeting. The Chairperson of the Advisory Council is Debbie Cox, Phoenix Fire, in Houston, Texas. Anyone can initiate a request to change the Rules. There is a form to assist you and the Advisory Council to work on your requested change(s) attached. These requests for change will be discussed at this public meeting. Anyone can speak and eventually the Council will vote on all requests and everything they approve will be printed in the next Texas Register. This printing alerts the citizens of the State or any interested party to make written comment(s). If written comment(s) warrant a public hearing, one will be scheduled. Anyone can speak at a public hearing however comments can be made only on subjects that are the agenda for this meeting. If there are no written comments the revised Rules are presented to the Commissioner of Insurance for adoption. Please note this is the process for any changes to the Rules (not just NFPA 10).

As I said you do not actually get a vote but you sure do get several opportunities to be heard or have your comments to be read and reacted to. It is an open and fair process and it will definitely be an improved process if you get involved. This process is how you get to vote.

Debbie Cox is an excellent chairperson and will assist anyone in getting their suggested rule changes before the Advisory Council. It all starts with the form that is for this express purpose. A copy is inserted in this newsletter (OK to duplicate if needed).

Now here is the burning question. If the advisory council where to meet and ask itself whether to adopt the above sections and paragraphs regarding certified technicians how would you want them to proceed? You have a voice and it needs to be heard and this controversial question (and others) will need to be addressed. It all starts with your opinion and a good place to find others with the same opinion is within the FEDOT membership. Or if you do not find like minded thinking it is an excellent place to win people over to your point of view. I am certain that this will be discussed at several future FEDOT meetings. So please get involved.

**See attached SFMO Advisory Council Guide to Request a Rule Change form on back.**

# SFMO Advisory Council Guide to Request a Rule Change

**AGENDA ITEM No:**

*(Leave blank. Will be completed by SFMO)*

**DATE SUBMITTED:**

*(Date of this submittal)*

**SUBMITTER:**

*(List your name, company and company address. Enter C of R or license number if applicable.)*

**REFERENCE:**

*(Indicate the section number and paragraph number of the proposed change or where a new rule should be inserted.)*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

~~Text with strike through indicates text to be deleted~~

Text underlined indicates text proposed to be added

*(Write in exiting rule and new rule. If no existing rule simply add the new. If amending an existing rule strike through existing text and underline new text.)*

**SUBSTANTIATION:**

*(Present a narrative to convince council of your recommendation. Evidence or examples will help support your position.)*

**COUNCIL ACTION/RECOMMENDATION:**

*(Leave blank for council to complete)*



August 2006

## FIRE PROTECTION SALES TIP OF THE MONTH

Did you know that the owner of the horse that wins the race by just ½ inch – a photo finish – will win up to 10 times the prize money that the owner of the 2nd place horse does? Fair? Perhaps not, but that's horse racing.

"So what - we're not jockeys or horse racing fans" you say. "We sell fire equipment and fire protection services. What does that horse racing story have to do with selling more?" you may ask. Valid question. The answer is that the story probably has a lot to do with selling more. Like winning a horse race, successful selling is the result of doing a lot of little things right. Like the nose over the finish line, it is the little things that win sales.

Take your vehicle for example. Whether you work out of a car, truck, or van, the appearance of that vehicle makes a difference. The appearance of your vehicle may perhaps make little difference to some customers but it may make all the difference with others. Confused? Let me explain.

Would you hire a personal trainer to help you achieve your physical goals who himself is 75 pounds overweight and unable to climb a flight of stairs? How comfortable would you be in flying 'cross country on an airplane with peeling paint, filthy windows and who's pilot enters the cockpit wearing jeans and with a 3 day beard? No way, right? Most would agree with you.

The condition and appearance of your vehicle can make a difference with some prospective buyers. The alleged "fire protection professional" who arrives in a dirty and disorganized truck or who's car is littered with soda cans, magazines and fast food wrappers sends up a warning flag to many buyers. Fire protection is a serious subject. Customers want their fire protection needs to be addressed by an individual who is serious about his or her career and whose vehicle also represents a professional, disciplined and serious approach as well.

Sales people - it is not necessary that you pull up in a new Mercedes-Benz, but when making sales calls, make sure your vehicle is clean, well maintained and organized - you never know who may be watching.

Good Selling!

*Bruce Carter*

Fire protection sales questions? Maybe we can help. Write us at [nafs3@mns.com](mailto:nafs3@mns.com)



The Following Was Copied From The Texas Association of School Boards Web Site

## Risk Management Fund Services

### Loss Prevention News Break: Kitchen Fire Suppression Systems

In 1994, the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) changed the kitchen hood fire suppression system standard from a dry chemical suppression agent to a wet, more efficient method (UL 300). The reason for this change is due to the use of more energy efficient kitchen food preparation equipment and healthier vegetable cooking oils...the new vegetable oils burn at a much higher temperature than the animal fats that were previously used. In addition, the use of the energy efficient fryers, griddles, ranges, charbroilers (gas radiant, electric, lava rock) and woks allow for fires to maintain heat for longer periods of time resulting in the fires being harder to extinguish with a dry chemical system. The manual-pull actuation for the kitchen fire suppression system should be used as the first response to a fire, because the actuation of the system also shuts off power or gas to the appliance.

**Warning: Not all wet fire suppression systems meet UL 300 requirements...so be careful of the system you select.**

### Important Dates and Changes Concerning Kitchen Fire Suppression Systems

**Not later than January 1, 2008**, all kitchen hood fire suppression systems must meet UL 300 standards. As of April 1, 2006, all systems not in compliance with UL 300 and NFPA 17-A guidelines should be yellow tagged, stating that the system does not meet the UL standard and that the system may not extinguish a typical fire within the hood system.

**Starting January 1, 2008**, all hood fire suppression systems not meeting UL standard 300 will be red tagged. It is advised to start checking and modifying your kitchen hood systems now to ensure they are in compliance before the January 1, 2008 deadline. State and local fire authorities can issue fines ranging up to \$1000 per day to a district not in compliance.

**Another change in the UL 300 standard addresses fire extinguishers for use in kitchens.** A class "K" portable fire extinguisher is now required in all commercial kitchens. The class "K" portable fire extinguisher has the capability of extinguishing small kitchen fires created by vegetable or animal oils and saturated fats and is to be used as a back-up fire fighting system. The class K portable extinguisher comes in a number of sizes and can be selected to meet your kitchen requirements.

If your district has any questions, please contact your local fire authorities or TASB Loss Prevention Services at 800-482-7276 extension 6305.

## LET'S NEGOTIATE:

First: When you hear Let's Negotiate, it depends on the circumstance. If it's business, I'd say the other party wants a better deal. That would be fine, but sometimes big outfits like Wal-Mart define negotiate as 'skin you alive'. A good deal is when both parties go home happy, meaning each side gained something. You might have lost a few dollars on individual goods or services, but gained a million dollar a year customer. It all works out if both sides give a little to get a little, in other words; negotiate. But if some big outfit drives you to bankruptcy over prices, then in the long run, then they haven't really won anything. Bankrupt companies do not have the money to buy the goods Wal-Mart sells. Never forget that the other fellow has a family to feed too.

If you are talking about personal matters, like say between a husband and wife, then "Let's negotiate" means something else entirely! In this instance, I would immediately think that the other party was not too excited about whatever my suggestion was but didn't want to crush me entirely, so they come up with some idea or the other to sweeten the deal for them, to get them to go along. You might want a little hug and a kiss, but she doesn't. But she will anyhow, if you paint the garage. That's what "Let's negotiate" means to me on the person to person level. Everybody wants to think they got a better deal by haggling, or negotiating.

In the Middle East, as well as South America, everywhere you go you hear "Let's negotiate". I'm thinking here of the markets and jewelry dealers, and such as that. It would never occur to them to simply take a price for an item at face value. They love to haggle. But these rascals will horse trade you to the poor house if they can and call you the fool for letting yourself be negotiated to poverty.

Everybody wants to negotiate something. Very rarely is anything taken for face value. We price our houses five thousand dollars high, because we know the buyer will want to offer five thousand less. Car dealers never expect to sell an automobile for sticker price because consumers like bargains. But a car dealer would sell you a ride at full sticker price if you were dumb enough to not try and negotiate. Car dealers are a special breed of criminal. Nowhere else in the land of the consumer is so much fraud built in, all to make the customer feel he is negotiating a price down. We see this sort of deception also in fake bargains designed to fool unwary consumers, like pretending the retail value of some good or service is an actual price. Nobody ever believes that the regular retail price is real.

There is room in everyone's business to allow for some negotiating room, so long as you stay within industry averages. I long ago gave up trying to convince customers that I had given them the best price up front. I'd say too that the notion of "Let's negotiate" can be a very positive thing. Maybe the customer can't afford your service unless you lower the price a little. Half a loaf is better than none if business is slow.

The hardest "Let's negotiate" statements to understand are those that are silent. Maybe you haven't said the right thing to get a client to do business with you, or offered some other form of inducement. "Let's negotiate" says to the hearer that a deal is imminent, but for a minor detail or two. When the potential customer says nothing, who knows what they want? You have to be a kind of mind reader and body language decoder to know when, by their silence, the other party is saying "Let's Negotiate". I cannot help you here because I am worthless at reading people. I am too simple and upfront. I can't read between the lines. That is my strength, and weakness. I used to get all flustered and aggravated when a customer would want to negotiate a price down. I had already made them the best deal in town, and it would kind of offend me when folks would try and whittle more off the price. These days, I'm a happier person because I have added 10% to every quote – this has moved my price range to the mid to upper part of the scale, and it's no big deal for me to shave a 10% or so off the quote to get the job. But there are some folks out there who will not rest until they've wrung the very last penny out of you. I don't have much patience with them anymore.

Whenever some outfit wants to negotiate, I know it means cut my price. I will generally do that, but I like to set a condition on that price reduction. I generally agree, but only if they will sign the contract immediately. Without some guarantee on their part, it will be just one compromise after the other with them, and time will be wasted on a contract I'd wind up never getting, rather than spending time with less customers who pay more!

By David Mettauer

## WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO ADJUST PRICING?

The other day I was talking to a friend at Church. We have a lot in common including the fact that we are both involved in our respective industry trade associations. I guess we both believe that it is appropriate to contribute time and effort to improve the industry where we work. And it is sometimes fun to put in rather than just take out. Kind of makes you feel like a good corporate citizen doesn't it?

He sells and services electrical equipment so the conversations tend to stay very generic because neither of us understands each others business. However what we ended up discussing at length should be near and dear to everyone reading this article i.e. how to price your product. We both agreed that it is easier to adjust pricing during good economic times than at any other time. To quote him exactly he said "if you cannot take a price increase and hold it now then when can it be done?". I interpreted from this statement that his business is good; congratulations, so is ours. So let's review; the economy is good, our businesses are flourishing and it has been a long time since we have reviewed pricing so let's raise prices where we need to and let's do it now.

A selling price is either driven by costs plus profit or by market conditions such as supply and demand and the competitive environment. Most manufacturers and suppliers have recently raised pricing. Some say it is the cost of steel or aluminum, others the cost of labor, some blame the cost of gasoline and transportation in general, while others have even trotted out that old stand-by, the cost of insurance. No matter the reason if adjustments are needed, pick a reason and do it. This may well be the season where you can not only take the increase but you can hold it. The most embarrassing thing is to have to rescind a price increase because your customers scream and turn to your competitors. My friend thinks we have both the reason and the season.

If it is time to raise your pricing it needs to be based on either of the above formulas. If you know your costs what is a fair mark-up percentage or flat mark-up amount? Or what is the going price in your trade area for the item you are selling? Do these prices include delivery, tagging, installation or any quantity considerations? What is the method of payment and how does that impact the selling price? Credit terms have value, credit card transactions usually have an associated processing fee and cash or check must ultimately be deposited into your account. None of this happens for free. Good rationale should always be present in every business decision. So if you are reviewing pricing just be certain you know why you are making adjustments, how you are arriving at the new price and then do it hoping it sticks. Also hope that your competitors follow your lead or if they have already taken that lead you need to decide to be a willing follower.

The following is presented as food for thought based on something worth thinking about. By Pete Frayer

## THAT SPECIAL KIND OF STUPID

I cannot help myself, I must comment. I recently read a newspaper account of an injury to a Fire Equipment Technician and several kitchen workers. The Newspaper said that this technician dropped a cartridge into a fryer. The story said this incident occurred at a McDonalds so we can probably assume it was a Fire Suppression System Cartridge; it really does not matter though because any cartridge is dangerous, and that fact is exasperated when heated.

Here is why I feel the need to comment. The article said the cartridge exploded while the technician was fishing it out of the fryer. My Dad used to say that some behavior fits into a category that can only be called "that special kind of stupid". Nothing else can be said. You don't ever complicate a bad situation with a bad remedy. It amazes me that a technician would try to fish out the cartridge. A better remedy would be to evacuate the immediate area and take actions that would cool the fryer and cartridge. It defies logic to do anything other than lower the temperature of the cartridge prior to touching it.

I am a big proponent of safety training. Every technician needs to know that they are handling a pressure vessel and if its internal pressure exceeds its rating it will blow the safety disk. And if the safety fails the entire cylinder will rupture. I hope everyone will use this story to re-enforce technician training so that no other technician ever gets injured like this again.

By Pete Frayer

## **MORE INFORMATION ON FIRE EXTINGUISHER ELECTRONIC MONITORING**

Recent changes to NFPA 10 have made all of us painfully aware that our basic fire extinguisher service business may be under attack. These changes will allow regular monthly inspections and annual maintenance requirements to be modified if an extinguisher is "electronically monitored". I have read several excellent articles and had many serious conversations about the subject. Most of the articles and discussions revolve around the negative impact that these changes will have on our businesses. I really believe that is true; however I wanted to write an article that puts the focus on the benefits of live and in person service and the benefits that a customer will derive from that kind work. Any financially negative impact that electronic monitoring will have on us and our business will likely be of no concern to our customers, even though it should be. No one should really want their service company to be struggling financially. Rather than sing a sad tune I suggest we go on offense and sell the benefits of using real people to do real work.

I am still old school where I define an inspection as a quick check and I believe that a business owner or an outside vendor can do this job. A trained and competent person with a basic desire to do this job monthly is vitally important. I further defined annual maintenance as a thorough examination to be done by someone with knowledge, parts, tools and manufacturers manuals. I am not convinced that any electronic device can substitute for what a real person, with knowledge, parts and tools can get accomplished.

Here is what I think a real person can do; or an electronic monitoring device cannot do; and how this will benefit your customer.

1. Corrosion not only includes visible rust but it also includes corrosion around the pull pin. If the pull pin is corroded in place, the extinguisher is a prop.
2. Insects build nests in the strangest places. Nozzle tips, around brackets, under carrying handles have all been tried by various insects. If an extinguisher never gets moved (hefted to insure weight or placed on a scale) spider webs can grow to adjoining surfaces etc. Many employees will not attempt to use an insect covered extinguisher for fear of being stung or bitten. A good technician has the same concerns but is willing to do a complete service job which probably includes minor nest removal and insect control.
3. Obstructions that block an extinguisher from access or view will never be picked up electronically. A good service technician will know where extinguishers are hidden from view, find them, service them and either relocate them or clear a path so it is accessible for real fire fighting.
4. Physical Damage is not limited to dents in the shell. If the operating handle is bent it is unlikely that the pull pin can be easily removed. Physical damage can also make the labels and operating information illegible. It is commonly accepted that people need pictographic information to successfully use an extinguisher.
5. Placement and Hazard evaluation are ongoing. There is really no such thing as a customer that does not change something during the year. Processes change, equipment is bought or moved, housekeeping declines or the business changes hands. All of this can go unnoticed unless a good technician with new eyes is invited in for service work. A service visit usually includes a hazard analysis.
6. Tamper Seals should be broken once a year and replaced. This creates a documentation trail that says the technician did his job and that the pull pin can be easily removed prior to operation.
7. Training should never be forgotten. That is why we have a HMIS label and pictographs on extinguishers. People forget, new people do not always get good training and everyone needs a friendly reminder to reinforce past training.
8. Hydrostatic or Internal Maintenance date information can only be obtained by looking at the extinguisher and making an evaluation. Cylinder requalification and internal maintenance are not revenue generators; this work is done because history shows that a pressure vessel full of chemicals needs periodic internal evaluation to insure serviceability.
9. Readability of Operating Instructions and HMIS label is important. Not everyone has been trained to operate an extinguisher so give the untrained a little assistance. You sure cannot be at every fire event so at least put the instructions in writing.
10. Product updates and recalls do occur in every business including the fire extinguisher business. Only an informed technician will be able to keep up with all of this type of information. We had a recent replacement program that told us to put the

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extinguisher in a bag so no one could get injured. How many end users would have been prepared for that event?

Someone will be paid to watch the calendar, alert the owner when twelve months have elapsed and stick with it until it gets scheduled and completed. I do the annual maintenance here in our fire extinguisher shop and offices and cannot tell you how many times I get interrupted while servicing six extinguishers. We run a business (that's what we do), located in a building that has extinguishers hanging on the walls. We are not any different from your average customer.

I hope I have inspired someone to go sell service. We do service because it is valuable and helpful. It is only after we do service that there is a code compliance benefit to the customer. So go on offense with the battle cry "we are valuable to our customers because we use a real person to service your fire equipment needs".

By Pete Frayer

This article is scheduled to appear in *Firewatch!* March, 2007.

## **WHAT IS A PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS WORTH?**

How much is an extinguisher worth, well that depends on how expensive the fire was? Or it may depend on what value is derived from a quick extinguishment that prevented greater loss. If you never use it an extinguisher only gives you peace of mind and code-compliance so what is the value of that? You see, placing a value on something is relative to what costs or what savings it produces.

What is a recharge worth? Oh probably about 40% of the cost of a new extinguisher. The cost of buying a new extinguisher is very low if all you want is peace of mind. But the value of the same extinguisher will be very high if it prevents a minor event from becoming a big event or major loss. A recharge may be just the cost of getting back ones peace of mind (if you never use it again). Or the cost of a recharge could be a very small if it prevented a major loss or could control another fire and minimize a future loss.

This reminds me of one of my father's lessons; you know the lessons that were intended to teach me about life. One of his favorites was "Does a man buy a drill because he wants a drill or because he wants a hole?" I wonder how he would have stated that lesson if he had known I would end up in the fire extinguisher business. Does a man buy an extinguisher because he wants peace of mind and code-compliance? Or does a man buy an extinguisher because he wants to put out a fire?

Have you noticed that your best customers are usually your most profitable customers? Could it be that I have that statement backwards? Your most profitable customer is usually your best customer. One of the factors that can make a customer profitable is if they are willing to pay a fair price for an extinguisher or recharge because they know what value it has in a fire event. Normally a customer that is only buying peace of mind and code compliance is not your most valued customer. Some of our best customers have fires and they want something that is reliable and will work. They are the type of customer that is willing to pay for good service.

What prompted the question was one of those famous water cooler discussions regarding pricing a new extinguisher. You cannot have this discussion without also discussing the cost of recharges. Hopefully part of the answer is above, but don't forget to include what we have always called a fair profit. And I just so happen to have an opinion of what I think is a fair profit. A fair profit is just that, it is fair. It costs a certain amount of money to run a business. A fair profit is one that will allow you to remain in business so that in the future you will be available to recharge an extinguisher if there is ever such a need.

By Pete Frayer



# State Fire Marshal's Alert

February 22, 2006

## University Campus Liquid Nitrogen Cylinder Explosion

Recently, a compressed gas cylinder exploded in a state university campus laboratory. The explosion was attributed to dangerous alterations that had been made to the cylinder. To help prevent similar gas cylinder-related incidents, universities shall, at a minimum:

- Repair, replace or remove from service leaking, damaged, or corroded compressed gas cylinders or systems.
- Implement and sustain a preventative maintenance program for all compressed gas cylinders and systems. A preventative maintenance program shall include periodic inspection of all cryogenic fluid storage systems and replacement of pressure relief valves every five years, ensuring the valve is set as required by the tank design. A record of the inspection should be prepared and provided to the user or the authority having jurisdiction upon request.
- Ensure that an individual trained in tank usage be in attendance at all times cryogenic fluid is transferred from one container to another.
- All service, repair, modification, or removal of valves, pressure-relief devices, or other container appurtenances shall be performed in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 55 and the Compressed Gas Association (CGA) guidelines (<http://www.cganet.com/Publication.asp?mode=c>).



Figure 1 -Effect of Explosion on Dewar Cylinder Compared to unaffected cylinder

### Incident Specifics



Figure 2 - Hallway Outside Laboratory Showing Explosion Damage

At approximately 3:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 12, 2006, an explosion occurred in a state university chemistry building laboratory, causing substantial building damage. The explosion resulted from a rupture in a liquid nitrogen (Dewar) cylinder. The cylinder was originally constructed and tested in December 1980.

The State Fire Marshal's Office, in cooperation with the university's environmental health & safety office, conducted an investigation that included an assessment of the building damage and reconstruction of the events leading to the explosion. The resulting examination revealed catastrophic failure of the cylinder. The failure permitted rapid expansion of the nitrogen gas, blowing out the bottom of the tank and propelling the cylinder upwards.

The examination revealed that the cylinder's pressure release valve and rupture disc had been replaced by two brass plugs. Without these two features in place, the cylinder's rupture-prevention function became compromised. During the investigation, lab students related that the bottom portion of the cylinder had been frosting for approximately twelve to eighteen months, suggesting to them that the cylinder was "leaking". It is speculated that

the tank was relieving normal excessive pressure through an old leaking gasket on the top of the tank (the actual pressure-relief function had been plugged). Approximately twelve hours prior to the explosion, one of the students replaced the leaking gasket and refilled the cylinder. As the old gasket that helped relieve internal pressure had been replaced, the now full cylinder was completely sealed. The cylinder ruptured when its internal pressure rose above 1,000 psi.

The catastrophic failure of the nitrogen cylinder was a direct result of the removal and subsequent plugging of the internal tank pressure relief devices. The cylinder was modified by inexperienced and unidentified person(s) resulting in the eventual failure of the cylinder. It could not be determined when the modifications took place.



Figure 3 - Inside the Laboratory after Explosion