



FEDOT Newsletter

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FEDOT Fall Meeting

Saturday, October 15, 2011

8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

La Quinta Inn & Suites—San Antonio Convention Center

303 Blum St., San Antonio

FEDOT room rate: \$99

210-222-9181

Meeting Agenda

8:00–9:00 a.m.: Registration and continental breakfast

9:00–9:30 a.m.: Introduction by FEDOT officers

9:30–10:30 a.m.: Bruce Carter, North American Fire Sales, will speak on selling principles, sales training, and delivering outstanding customer service.

10:30 a.m.–Noon: Jeff Terrey, vice president of Rasky Baerlein, will speak on the importance of having a relationship with local legislators and how to build that relationship.

Noon–1:00: Lunch

1:00–2:00 p.m.: Josh Lambert, State Fire Marshal's Office, will speak on the latest legislation.

Plus, don't miss Bruce Carter's "Sell to Win!" full-day seminar on October 14th from 9 to 5, lunch provided. This seminar is limited to the first 50 FEDOT members who pre-register, so email PhilFoster@beckind.com to sign up!

Governor Signs Law Mandating Extinguisher Maintenance in Government Vehicles

On May 27, 2011, Governor Rick Perry signed House Bill 564 into law, requiring the annual maintenance of fire extinguishers in government-owned vehicles in certain local governmental jurisdictions. The law, known as the Ariel Corley Memorial Act, states that "A local government that adopts an ordinance, order, or policy requiring motor vehicles owned by the local government to be equipped with portable fire extinguishers shall require maintenance to be performed on the portable fire extinguishers annually in accordance with standards that are at least as stringent as the National Fire Protection Association Standard Number 10, Portable Fire Extinguishers."

The original bill was authored by Representative Tom Craddick and was spurred by an incident in Midland in 2010 where officers attending to an accident scene attempted to use their vehicle extinguishers which were out-of-date and inoperable. They were unable to put out the fire, and a teenage girl died. The new law went into effect immediately after signing. ★

New Fire Extinguisher Rules in Effect

New fire extinguisher rules were adopted this summer in the state of Texas. Definitions for "portable fire extinguisher inspection," and "service" and "servicing" were altered in Title 20 of the Texas Insurance Code. The new rules also introduce an exemption from licensing requirements for firms who are contracted by the owner and specifically trained to do monthly inspections on their fire extinguishers.

The state also updated to the most recent versions of the NFPA standards, including NFPA 10, 2010 edition, and the 2009 editions of NFPA 17 and 17A.

You can view the rules online: www.tdi.state.tx.us/fire/fmli.html

★

President's Letter

by Phil Foster, Beck Industries, Inc.

Something strange is happening! I am actually excited about the upcoming FEDOT fall meeting in San Antonio. I mean, I always enjoy the meetings, but excited might be an exaggeration. This meeting, however, is different. Not only is it our big meeting of the year, but we will be addressing some of the most important and timely issues that we have covered in years.

As I drove to work this morning, I noticed how many different businesses were along my route. The fire industry will literally take you into any business—industrial, commercial, medical, etc. That led me to remember our fall meeting.

We are privileged to have the pre-eminent sales trainer in the fire business with us at the meeting. Bruce Carter has trained thousands of fire

professionals over the years, and I am excited that he will be doing his presentation “Sell to Win!” If you have not heard Bruce speak, you won’t want to miss this meeting.

Also at the meeting we will have a presentation on how to influence lawmakers. Jeff Terrey of Rasky Baerlein Strategic Communications, the Fire Equipment Manufacturers’ Association’s lobby group, will show us how to take part in legislation efforts. Given the damage that detrimental laws can cause to our industry, influence with legislators is a very important thing to have. Jeff has a background in coordinating government relations with various clients and implementing grassroots organizing strategies, so I’m sure we’ll have a lot to learn from him.

Last, but not least, we will have Josh Lambert from the State Fire Marshal’s Office. Josh is the Office’s technical and engineering specialist. He will be speaking to us concerning legislation that FEDOT was involved in shaping over the last few months. He will also be talking to us about the new fire extinguisher rules recently adopted by the State of Texas.

These three presentations will be so good and so important that I know you will be, like me, excited about attending the fall meeting in San Antonio. Meeting details are included in this newsletter.

Thanks for your involvement and attendance. I look forward to seeing you all there.★

Phil Foster

Did You Know?

FEDOT Members Represent the Industry on NFPA Committees

NFPA codes have a big influence on our industry. That’s a fact. And behind the codes are individuals sitting on technical committees working to keep them updated. Many industries are represented on these technical committees. What you may not know is that some of our very own FEDOT members sit on several committees.

Currently, we are represented as follows:

- **Dave Mettauer**, East Texas Fire Protection, **NFPA 14**, *Standard for the Installation of Standpipes and Hose Systems*.
- **Larry Angle**, M. Jacks Fire & Safety, **NFPA 17**, *Standard for Dry Chemical Extinguishing Systems*, and **NFPA 17A**, *Standard for Wet Chemical Extinguishing Systems*.

The NFPA frequently lists the code committees seeking new members in its *NFPA News* newsletter, which you can find online. Whether or not you

have the time to commit to serving on a committee yourself, it is important to be aware of and participate in the code revision process. Anyone can participate. As a code goes through different stages of revision you can submit proposals for changes to the code and comment on other people’s proposals.

There are a lot of codes, and a long revision process, but the NFPA provides all of the information you need at www.nfpa.org. Just click the link for “Codes and Standards.” Currently several of the standards that impact much of our industry are being revised. The first part of the process has been completed, and hundreds of proposed changes have been submitted for NFPA 10, 17, and 17A. The respective technical committees have met and addressed each of these proposals and also added proposals of their own.

All of these proposed revisions will be published by the NFPA in a document called the Report on Proposals (ROP). The ROP for these standards will be published on December 23, 2011. Copies can be downloaded for free from the NFPA website. The comment closing date is March 2, 2012. You must use the “Form for Comment on NFPA Report on Proposals” which is available from the NFPA website. All comments get addressed by the technical committee.★

Did you also know FEDOT has representation on the ICC/NAFED exam development committee? Larry Angle sits on the committee for the pre-engineered technician exam.

Fire Protection's "Diamonds In the Rough"

By Bruce Carter

FEDOT's Fall Meeting is just around the corner, and I am excited to have the opportunity to be a part in this year's event. The title of my full-day program on October 14th is "Sell to Win!"—an industry-specific recipe for success in selling products and services in the fire protection industry.

For the past seventeen years I have enjoyed helping thousands of sales and service technicians reach their full career potential by mastering the basic selling skills essential to their success in the fire protection industry. Yes, you heard me correctly—service technicians can be outstanding sales representatives. They can become not just adequate but excellent sales producers IF they are properly incentivized, motivated, and trained to do so. The truth of the matter is that there are countless prospective customers right there in your market area that would actually *prefer* doing business with a service person than with a "salesperson."

You know, our society doesn't like dealing with salespeople very much. From childhood the buying public is warned about those slippery, slimy, fast-talking, money-grabbing, high pressure rascals that will tell you anything just to get your money. "I wouldn't trust that guy . . . why, he's just trying to sell ya . . ." mom and dad cautioned us. Perhaps we have even been the victim of one of those overzealous scoundrels and found ourselves the not-so-delighted owner of a car, appliance, or piece of lakefront property that we did not need, did not want, and really could not afford! The service technician, on the other hand, is nearly always perceived by the prospective buyer as not only much more *knowledgeable* but much more *ethical* than the stereotypical salesperson.

"Well, Bruce, you've got a point there I suppose, but what about the dry chemical, dirt, and grease that my technicians always seem to get into? They certainly can't make an effective sales call looking like that, can they?" the skeptical business owner might ask. Ordinarily the answer would be "no" because in certain situations a less-than-well-pressed appearance could certainly cost the sale. In the case of the hard-working service rep though, a little "work dirt" doesn't hurt and may actually lend some credence to the technician's sales approach.

Case in point: Our home air conditioner was suffering from a case of "owner neglect" a couple of months back so we had our local heating/air conditioning service company come out, troubleshoot, and provide a proposed solution to the problem. Both a service technician and a sales rep arrived. Mentally replaying my interaction with the men after the proposal was made and they had left, I recalled that 99 percent of my questions, eye contact, and attention had been directed to the service rep and not the sales rep. It was not that the sales rep was unprofessional or incompetent. He was neither. My perception, however, like that of many consumers, was that *it was the service technician who was the true expert and knew more of what he was talking about.* My subconscious mind told me that it was the service technician who was the true expert of the two representatives, so I listened and spoke to him.

It makes sense to teach sales techniques to technicians. In October's "Sell to Win!" presentation, I will be sharing the "secrets" to super-successful fire protection selling, covering such pertinent topics as:

- Your ATTITUDE determines your altitude!

- Characteristics of fire protection's top producers
- Proven prospecting techniques that work like a charm
- Professional presentation skills
- Selling new fire equipment like crazy!
- Handling those common sales objections
- . . . and so much more!

Someone said, "Nothing happens in the business world until something is sold." In countless fire equipment organizations, the ability to sell products and services is the crucial difference between tremendous success and disappointing mediocrity.

I would challenge all fire protection organizations to use and develop one of their most valuable business-building resources: sales and service people, those potential fire protection "diamonds in the rough."

See you in San Antonio! ★



Bruce Carter is the president of North American Fire Sales, a training organization specializing exclusively in the fire and life safety industry offering:

- In-house sales and customer service training seminars.
- In-the-field technician and sales rep training.
- Association and corporate keynote presentations
- Fire protection business consulting

www.nafiresales.com

Top Ten Things That a Manufacturer Hates to Hear a Service Technician Say

By Craig Voelkert

Performing service and maintenance on extinguishers and systems isn't rocket science, but it can be like tip-toeing through a minefield. The often unappreciated individuals that come face to face with customers—and problems—in the field are, by and large, a group of trained, dedicated professionals. A good technician has to have motivation, discipline, training, knowledge, perseverance, and judgment.

As in any vocation or profession, there are good technicians and less-than-stellar technicians. This may be because of insufficient or improper training, lack of knowledge, or lack of experience. There aren't any real college courses you can take for a lot of this stuff, so you learn by doing, attending classes offered by associations such as NJAFED, studying manuals and NFPA standards, taking NAFED courses and the like.

On the manufacturing end, we have heard certain quotations from technicians over the years that tend to make us cringe. Here then, I present what I consider to be the "Top Ten" list of those quotations. I hope you enjoy this, and please understand this does not carry a holier-than-thou attitude as I am guilty of many of these myself at some point in my career.

#10 "Let me show you a trick that I learned..."

This isn't always cause for alarm as manufacturers aren't always perfect in how they write instructions; however, some interesting statements have followed these words. As examples: "The best way to clean extinguisher valves is with coarse steel wool wrapped around a wooden dowel attached to a power drill. Works great." Or, "Always use an open five gallon bucket to pour the gasoline for a fire demo/training instead of those weird safety cans." Or, "If you clean the valve stem on the wire brush wheel it goes a lot faster." And another favorite, "I use air instead of water for the hydro test. Saves time drying." Honest, I've heard every one of them and could use up a

lot of space with such "war stories." Half the time these "tricks" are handed down from one technician to another as "gospel," making everyone's job more difficult. Before you try a "trick," check it out against the manufacturer's manual and NFPA 10, or call the technical/engineering department at the manufacturer and get their opinion of the "trick."

#9 "They won't notice the difference," or "It should work."

What difference? It should work or it will work? This isn't carpet cleaning. If the "difference" is the deciding factor regarding safety or proper fire protection, then shame on you. You know better, and you are not doing your job. The customer is counting on you to be a professional. This can be difficult when dealing with extinguishers and systems day in and day out, but that is the challenge. Part of the job is to be disciplined and vigilant, treating every extinguisher and system as if it will be needed in a critical fire situation. If you can't do that or don't want to do that, find another vocation, now.

#8 "I thought you stood behind your product."

This usually comes after a pretty interesting story. Generally speaking, most manufacturers honor their warranties, but everyone has their limits. Just say "But, I thought you stood behind your product" after each one of these examples: 1) An extinguisher that had been shot with a .50 caliber round and drug under a garbage truck for over a mile, 2) A CO₂ extinguisher with a bad valve stem discovered after its third hydrotest, 3) Well within the warranty period after five years in the field, an extinguisher without a cover, located in a cement plant, had become completely encased in—you guessed it—cement, 4) My personal favorite—a national chain store had replaced a number of extinguishers with new ones purchased through a distributor. Then, out of the blue, a semi-trailer full of old

competitor's extinguishers shows up at the plant along with a request for credit from the manufacturer—one for one.

#7 "Every time I do a six-year maintenance on your extinguishers, they leak. What are you going to do about it?"

The next question from the manufacturer is, "Were they leaking before you did the six-year maintenance?" If the answer is "No," we start to talk about maintenance procedures. More often than not, it comes down to parts use. Using non-OEM parts, such as O-rings supplied by an O-ring manufacturer that don't meet the extinguisher manufacturer's specifications, can result in leaks around the neck or collar. These days, even counterfeit valve stems and gauges at very tempting prices are available, but these may result in a leaker, or worse, a failure. Some of the service "tricks" discussed in #10 have resulted in consistent leakers as well.

#6 "I just fill it until it flows out of the top. It will settle back down to the right level."

This can cause all kinds of problems. Besides violating the service manual, this practice also violates NFPA 10, 7.4.1.3: "The amount of recharge agent shall be verified by weighing." Under or overfilling an extinguisher will have a drastic effect on the extinguisher's performance. Range, flow rate, discharge duration, and nozzle patterns will be altered with changes in the fill weight. You wouldn't think of putting a hose and horn assembly from a 5 lb. ABC extinguisher on a 10 lb. Purple K. It would be wrong, one could even say down-right stupid. Recharging the extinguisher with the wrong fill—either too much or too little agent—will have the same effect as a 5 lb. nozzle on a 10 lb. extinguisher. This may involve filling the unit several times and waiting for the chemical to settle in between fills, depending on the make and model of the extinguisher.

#5 “Don’t worry about the safety cap (or diffuser), it’ll be fine.”

I couldn’t tell you how many times I’ve seen system cylinders, nitrogen cylinders, cartridges, and other pressure vessels either being handled or transported without safety devices. There is an old saying: “Familiarity breeds contempt.” You could substitute complacency for contempt when it comes to pressure vessels. Because we deal with them constantly, without incident, we can let our guard down. It only takes one false assumption to have disastrous results when dealing with pressure vessels. We’ve all been warned. We’ve all heard the stories. Perhaps it is because only a few of us have witnessed the uncontrolled energy and terror that transpires when a cylinder valve breaks or a cartridge disc bursts without a diffuser. It doesn’t rank with one of my near-death experiences, but it is a real close second. Having had such incidents occur within close proximity to my person, I’ve never understood how anyone could ever treat a pressure vessel with a cavalier attitude.

#4 “I fixed the leaker, pumped it up and gave the valve stem a little twist.”

Yikes! Once you twist the valve stem you have probably galled the stem or bent it or both. This will likely cause a failure when someone tries to discharge the extinguisher. If it was a leaker from the factory, we as a manufacturer need to honor our warranty for two reasons: 1) that is what warranties are for and 2) this gives us accurate QA information and numbers. If it was not a factory leaker, don’t make matters worse by causing a future failure. Take the time to do things right by running through the maintenance steps again. Remember, treat every extinguisher as if it will be called upon in a critical fire situation.

#3 “The more lube the better to make sure it seals.”

I refer to this as “More is Not Always Better—Part 1.” Too much lubricant is

not a good thing. I often see where extinguishers have been re-assembled with lubricant placed on the valve stem seating surface. This is expressly forbidden in the service manual and will cause all kinds of problems with the discharge. Even more common is to see excess lubricant on the top O-ring of the valve stem. The only purpose of the top O-ring is to prevent agent from escaping out the top of the valve during discharge. By applying excess lubricant to the top O-ring, two things may occur: 1) the excess lubricant can wipe down the stem during assembly and get stuck in the valve body; this can cause an obstruction during discharge and attract dirt and debris, 2) excess lubricant on the stem on top of the valve body will attract dirt and debris which can cause the stem to seize during operation, resulting in a failure.

#2 “If the operating pressure is 195 psi, I set the regulator to 400 psi. It recharges faster that way.”

I refer to this as “More is Not Always Better—Part 2.” Lots of problems here. Safety, NFPA 10, manufacturer’s manual, damage to the extinguisher...Let’s start with NFPA 10, 7.4.4.2.1.2. “A regulated source of pressure, set no higher than 25 psi (172 kPa) above operating (service) pressure, shall be used to pressurize fire extinguishers.” The same requirement is found in our manuals. Don’t use 400 psi if you don’t need 400 psi. Furthermore, a sudden rush of that much pressure may do damage to the bourdon tube in the gauge and result in a damaged or stuck gauge.

And the **#1** Thing That a Manufacturer Hates to Hear a Technician Say: **“I always use a rubber mallet to loosen the dry chemical during annual maintenance.”**

You won’t find this technique or step in any manufacturer’s manual or in NFPA 10. I consider it unnecessary and potentially damaging to the extinguisher. Unlike stories that you may have heard, there isn’t 195 psi worth of nitrogen pressing down on the dry chemical throughout the year, compacting the chemical into an impenetrable solid

mass that can only be remedied by the skillfully applied rubber mallet whack as only performed by a properly trained technician.

Pressure doesn’t apply itself in one direction within a vessel—it applies in all directions. That, among other factors, is why stored-pressure extinguishers pass the compaction tests relatively easily. All UL listed fire extinguishers, regardless of design, are required to pass a compaction test where the extinguisher is subjected to vibration and then discharged. A minimum percentage (85%) of agent must be successfully discharged in order to pass the test (most major manufacturers discharge well above the minimum requirement, in the low- to mid-90% range).

Turning a stored-pressure extinguisher upside down and banging on the bottom of the shell with a rubber mallet won’t “loosen” the chemical for the next year, nor is it necessary to do so, based upon the UL testing. It can, however, cause damage to the bourdon tube on the gauge and cause a host of other problems. Interestingly enough, while I have witnessed a fair number of technicians employing the “rubber mallet technique” during annual maintenance, I rarely see technicians remove the hose and horn assembly to check for obstructions, which is a requirement of the service manual and NFPA 10. Personally, I never used a rubber mallet for such purposes, but then I was servicing extinguishers in California and in those days we had to discharge and recharge them every year, so...

I hope you enjoyed this and either learned something or had some fun. If I ruffled any feathers, I apologize, but as I said at the start, I’m guilty of more than a few of these in my career, either from ignorance or poor training. But like everything in life, once you know better, do better. ★



**FIRE
EQUIPMENT
DISTRIBUTORS
of TEXAS**

P.O. Box 461750 San Antonio, TX 78246

**Join us for our
Fall Meeting**

**October 15, 2011
8 AM-2 PM**

**La Quinta Inn &
Suites
303 Blum St.
San Antonio, TX
78731
(800) 299-6977**

See you there!

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 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, skills, 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.