

SprinklerScene

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International Fire Sprinkler Association to be Formed

A special meeting held in conjunction with the NFSA Annual Seminar in San Antonio in September has led to the formation of an International Fire Sprinkler Association (IFSA). To be chartered in Bermuda, the new organization will provide a mechanism for supporting fire sprinkler promotional efforts worldwide. It will be a vehicle to collect and disburse funds to individual programs in various countries aimed at expanding or improving the use of fire sprinklers.

As proposed, the new IFSA will be open to any corporation, partnership, trade association, society or person engaged in the manufacture, sale, installation, design, maintenance, promotion or regulation of fire sprinkler, water spray, or water mist systems or their components. As such, the Association will have multiple membership classes, including manufacturer/supplier, contractor, professional, and trade/professional association. However, any corporation, partnership or individual eligible for any membership class can elect to become a Governing Member at a higher level of contribution. The Governing Members will serve as the Board of Directors and meet on an annual basis to review applications for programs and approve grants in support of those programs.

At its October 1998 meeting, the NFSA Board of Directors authorized its staff to proceed with the mechanics of forming the separate organization. The NFSA will provide support services to the new organization, and will transfer most of its international activities to the IFSA. Through a subscribing membership arrangement, IFSA members will continue to receive the benefits of NFSA membership, such as newsletters and other periodicals, and discounts for publications and seminars.

Recruitment of Governing Members is expected to begin with the new year, and the first Annual Meeting of the Association will be scheduled for the second quarter of 1999.

Central Sprinkler Signs Consent Agreement with CPSC

Central Sprinkler Corporation and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission have signed a Consent Agreement and Order resulting in the recall of all Omega brand sprinklers, including those manufactured with a silicone o-ring since June of 1996. Under the terms of the agreement, Central has stopped production of the Omega, and will undertake a \$37.3 million program to alert owners of the Omega sprinklers, provide replacement glass bulb sprinklers utilizing Belleville spring seals, and establish a trust fund to help reimburse owners for installation costs of the replacement sprinklers. The agreement with CPSC is also expected to serve as the framework for settlement of civil class action lawsuits filed against Central. Building owners have until August 1, 1999 to submit applications and waivers to qualify for the remediation program.

A summary of the provisions of the Consent Agreement and Order was published in the November/December 1998 issue of NFSA's *Sprinkler TechNotes* and is available on the NFSA website at www.nfsa.org.



Manufacturers Move Toward Sprinkler Model Identification

Under a new proposal that has been tentatively approved for the 1999 edition of NFPA 13, all manufacturers will be required to mark their sprinklers, by January of 2001, with a model identification number consisting of one or two alphabetic characters followed by three or four numbers. The characters will identify the manufacturer, and the numbers will indicate the specific model of sprinkler. As examples, one sprinkler could be identified as model A123, while another could be model BC5678. A separate model number will be required for each variation in response characteristics, spray pattern (deflector) and orifice size.

The sprinkler identification number will be referenced in database information to explain sprinkler characteristics and listings as provided by the listing organizations. This type of information is expected to be available on-line as well as in published directories. At the plan review stage, sprinkler identification numbers detailed on the working drawings can be checked against the database, ensuring that the performance characteristics are appropriate for the applications. In the field, the sprinkler identification numbers can be checked against the numbers specified on the drawings.

The sprinkler manufacturers have recognized the need to help organize fire sprinkler technology, and have already begun reserving their alphabetic character identifiers. The table below shows the characters that have been reserved to date for the various participating manufacturers.

Character Assignments to Sprinkler Manufacturers as of November 1998

| | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|----|---|
| A | Angus Fire Armour Ltd.(UK) | J | Jomos Brabdshutz GmbH (Switzerland) |
| AS | Automatic Sprinkler/AFAC (US) | N | Nohmi Bosai Ltd. (Japan) |
| C & CS | Central Sprinkler (US) | PI | Paradise Industry Co., Ltd (Korea) |
| CP | CPF Industriale SPA (Italy) | R | The Reliable Automatic Sprinkler Co. (US) |
| DS | Dhoop Singh & Sons (India) | RO | Rolland Arroiseurs Sprinklers (France) |
| F & G | Grinnell Corporation (US) | S | Star Sprinkler Inc. (US) |
| FG | Fireguard Mfg. Corp. (US) | SA | Spraysafe Automatic Sprinklers Ltd. (UK) |
| GL | Globe Fire Sprinkler Corp. (US) | SS | Senju Sprinkler Co., Ltd. (Japan) |
| GW | GW Sprinkler (Denmark) | TW | Total Walther GmbH (Germany) |
| HD | HD Fire Protection Company (India) | V | Victaulic Corporation (US) |
| IK | Isuzu Kogyo Co., Ltd. (Japan) | VK | The Viking Corporation (US) |

Certain characters are not available for use due to the potential for confusion with laboratories or sprinkler characteristics: EC, FM, FR, IR, OO, SK, SP, SU, QR, UL, WH, WP, WU.

Manufacturers reserving two characters in anticipation of extensive product lines must begin to use those characters within one year of the effective date of the new system, or they will become available to other manufacturers.

In conjunction with the new sprinkler identification system, NFPA 13 requirements for pintles will disappear, along with some of the other markings and codes currently on deflectors. While not inherently identifying the applications of the sprinklers, the sprinkler identification number will become the obvious link to performance characteristics. It will help avoid initial misapplication errors, and assist in the proper replacement of sprinklers following fires.

World Sprinkler News

- ◆ The November 1, 1998 nightclub fire in Goteborg, Sweden that claimed 64 lives was the worst fire catastrophe in that country in decades. It highlighted the fact that Sweden has no requirements for active fire protection in nightclubs. The Swedish sprinkler organization Sprinklerframjandet has taken the position that all places of public assembly should be protected with automatic sprinklers, and is urging the Swedish Fire Protection Association to form a coalition to work toward appropriate changes in laws and fire codes.
- ◆ The city of Plano, Texas, a fast-growing suburb of Dallas, has promoted the use of automatic sprinkler systems on a widespread basis as part of a community master plan adopted in 1982. Sprinklers have been required in all new occupancies exceeding 6,000 ft² (560 m²), and in restaurant/public assembly occupancies exceeding 5,000 ft² (460 m²). Many smaller occupancies are also protected with sprinklers on a voluntary basis to take advantage of construction and access advantages available through the building and fire codes. Insurance costs for sprinklered properties have averaged 40 % less each year, but average fire losses in sprinklered properties have been reduced by about 97 percent compared to nonsprinklered properties during the period of 1983 to 1988. An article on Plano's experience is being published in the Winter 1998-99 issue of the NFSA's *Sprinkler Quarterly*.
- ◆ On November 1, 1998, London's *Sunday Times* reported that Tyco International was considering making a bid for the Williams Group. The two companies are respectively the largest and second largest fire protection and security companies in the world. Tyco International leaped from number 324 in 1997 to number 117 in 1998 among Business Week's Global 1000, pulling ahead of companies such as Motorola and Texaco, with a market value of \$32.3 billion. This was prior to Tyco's November acquisition of electronic equipment manufacturer AMP Inc. for \$11.3 billion. Williams, not among the top 1000 in 1997, appeared as number 735 in 1998 with a market value of \$5.6 billion.
- ◆ In March of 1999, the National Fire Protection Association will begin publishing a Spanish language edition of its *NFPA Journal*. The twice-annual publication will be considered a supplement to the regular *NFPA Journal*, and will feature original articles rather than translations of articles from English.
- ◆ A market study prepared for NFPA by Ampersand Associates of Concord, Massachusetts indicates the total market for fire protection products in Latin America in 1998 is in excess of \$270 million. This includes an estimated \$15 million for sprinkler system equipment, exclusive of installation costs, and another \$8 million for fire pumps and controls. The total is broken out as follows:

Estimated 1998 Latin American Market for Sprinklers and Pumps (in \$US millions)

| | Mexico | Brazil | Rest of Latin America | Total |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|-------|
| Sprinklers | 4 | 5 | 6 | 15 |
| Fire Pumps & Controls | 2 | 1.5 | 4.5 | 8 |

- ◆ Four townhouses have been equipped with sprinkler protection in Motherwell, Scotland as a joint project of the Strathclyde Fire Brigade and Wormald Fire Systems. These are believed to be the first Scottish Housing Association properties to be protected with sprinklers.

- ◆ A recent issue of *Risk & Insurance* magazine contained an article suggesting that the cost of Year 2000 (Y2K) litigation in the United States from 1997 to 2005 could go as high as \$1 trillion. The article includes a quote from British attorney Michael Graham of London's Barlow Lyde & Gilbert, suggesting it describes "a scenario that may prove all too familiar as the millennium nears". The scenario: "A sprinkler system installed in a factory fails to operate at the commencement of the year 2000 due to a non-Y2K-compliant embedded chip. The factory is destroyed by a fire because the sprinkler system fails to work. The insured factory owner makes substantial property and business interruption claims. The concerned insurers could present reinsurance claims to their property account reinsurers."
- ◆ The Viking Corporation has already distributed a notice that their valves and devices (including release panels) utilize no date logic, and that Year 2000 compliance is not an issue.
- ◆ A fire that swept through a nonsprinklered landmark orphanage in Manila in the early hours of December 3, 1998 left at least 28 dead, including 23 babies and children under 5 years old. The two-story building had been built in 1913, as an orphanage and day-care center for working mothers, by the wives of the first Filipinos who had studied abroad. It had been used to house prominent families during the Japanese occupation in World War II. The fire is the worst tragedy in the Philippines since the 1996 disco fire that killed 160 people, and follows a 1997 orphanage fire that killed five children. The Philippines has been considering the adoption of the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, which would classify an orphanage as a residential board and care facility. Automatic sprinkler protection is required throughout all large (more than 16 residents) such facilities for new construction, and for many existing facilities based on the combination of building height and construction features.
- ◆ The thatch roof on the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London is protected by a "thatch drenching system", believed to be the first of its kind. It consists of open 6 mm drencher or ridgepole nozzles installed along the peak of the roof, fed by copper tube concealed within the thatch. In some areas of long roof slopes, window wall drenchers are used to supplement the ridgepole nozzles. The system is intended to merely pre-wet the roof of the open-stage 20-sided 1500-seat theatre. It is activated by a linear cable detection system installed just below the surface of the thatch, and arranged in 11 zones. Standard sprinkler protection protects parts of the connected tiring house, but sprinklers are not provided within the theatre itself so as retain the authenticity of the reconstruction.

Upcoming Meetings, Seminars, and Exhibitions of Interest

February 24-26, 1999 – Fire Suppression and Detection Research Application Symposium, Orlando, Florida, USA, The Fire Protection Research Foundation (FAX 1-617-984-7010).

May 10-13, 1999 – International Fire Expo`99, Birmingham, England, UK, (FAX 44-181-747-3856)

May 16-20, 1999 – NFPA World Fire Safety Congress and Exposition, Baltimore, Maryland, USA (FAX 1-617-984-7030).

June 9-11, 1999 – "Second Conference on Firesafety Design in the 21st Century," Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA (FAX 1-301-718-2242).

September 16-18, 1999 – NFSA Annual Seminar and Alternate Year Exhibition, Chicago, Illinois, USA (FAX 1-914-878-4215).