

Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association

Saving Lives, Protecting Property

ICC Expands Portable Extinguisher Requirements in in 2012 IFC

At the final hearing on the adoption of the 2012 International Fire Code (IFC), members of the International Code Council (ICC) approved a [National Association of State Fire Marshals \(NASFM\) proposal](#) to remove a potentially dangerous exception in the IFC. The Line 1 Exception of Section 906.1 allowed for a tradeoff of portable fire extinguishers in many occupancies equipped with quick response sprinklers. The 2012 version of the IFC was approved without this exception, which had been contained in previous versions.

Alan Shuman, President NASFM said "Portable extinguishers and extinguishing systems are vital aspects of a comprehensive fire safety strategy. Allowing for a tradeoff where extinguishers are not required throughout buildings if they are protected with other technologies ignores the importance of redundancy and does not recognize the value of portable extinguishers."

[NASFM's proposed code change](#) to the IFC regarding Section 906.1 pointed out that as a first line of defense, portable fire extinguishers are a critical firefighting tool and the most effective means of putting out a fire in its initial phase. While the consensus among the fire prevention community is that responders should always sound an alarm and call 911 when a fire is discovered, it does not, in every case, make sense for individuals to simply exit the building thereafter. To wait for a small fire to grow to a size large enough for a sprinkler head to activate is contrary to the lessons learned by members of the fire service and fire protection professionals.

According to Joe Pierce, Chair, Fire and Life Safety Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, "a sound fire safety strategy has to include portable extinguishers. They can extinguish fires during the incipient stage before they are large enough to trigger a sprinkler or other suppression system. This helps to protect against property damage and the buildup of dangerous smoke." The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) encourages redundancy in fire protection systems, advising against relying on any single safeguard.

Support for NASFM's proposal to delete the exception came from a wide cross section of fire service organizations, including the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Southwestern Division of the IAFC, and the Missouri Valley Division of the IAFC, the Joint Fire Service Review Committee (JFSRC), the California Fire Chiefs Association along with numerous state and regional associations.

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- Alan Shuman
Georgia State Fire Marshal
President, National Association of
State Fire Marshals



Call fire department;
Announce fire/alert
others; Make sure
everyone is safe.



Defend
in place



Fire/smoke
alarm sounds



Suppression
system
activates



Sprinkler
system
activates

Support for deleting the 906.1 exception has grown over the past six years with Alaska, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota and Washington all deleting or amending this exception upon adoption of the IFC as their statewide fire code. In addition, fourteen other states which adopt NFPA 1 statewide, do not allow for the potentially deadly tradeoff contained in the Line 1 exception.



Fire
department
responds

Fire causes minimal damage to shed at Sundale School near Visalia

Visalia Times-Delta, Sundale, CA, April 1, 2010

When a fire started in a storage shed near an unoccupied preschool classroom at the Sundale Elementary School, a maintenance worker used a fire extinguisher to put out the blaze. According to Tulare County Fire Department officials, the actions of Shawn Verkaik might have prevented a quarter-million dollars worth of damage at the school.

Verkaik said she saw flames beneath and above the shed door and reached for the extinguisher, spraying high and low on the door without opening it. "I just did what I was trained to do," she said. The fire was out when firefighters arrived soon after, officials said.

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- Joe Pierce, Dallas Fire & Rescue Department
Chair, Fire and Life Safety Section
International Association of Fire Chiefs

Teen steps in to put out library blaze

Statesman Journal, Scotts Mills, OR, April 21, 2010

Jacob Andvik, a Scotts Mills Eagle Scout with training on proper use of an extinguisher, was at the library with his mother and younger brother Sam when an individual lit the paper towel dispenser on fire in the women's restroom. As library staff worked to evacuate the building, Andvik pulled the fire alarm in the lobby. His mother grabbed a fire extinguisher and handed it to her son.

"We're taught how to respond to an emergency situation," Andvik said. Andvik ran into the restroom and extinguished the fire. He closed the doors to the room and then waited for fire personnel to respond.

Silverton Fire Chief Bill Miles said "had he not put it out when he did, we would have been looking at a whole lot more damage."

OSHA Workplace Safety Recommendations include Fire Extinguisher Training

According to OSHA, fire extinguishers can be invaluable tools to help fight smaller fires in the workplace or to protect evacuation routes. OSHA requires employers to thoroughly train workers not only how to use an extinguisher properly, but also how to accurately assess a situation and determine when evacuation is the safest course of action.

Safety+Health Magazine, Feb 2010



Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association 101

The Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association is the premier trade association representing leading brands, and spanning dozens of product categories related to fire protection. The Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association is comprised of four divisions represented by product categories: portable fire extinguishers, interior equipment, fire hose and pre-engineered suppression systems. These divisions work together in an effort to promote Balanced Fire Protection, Life Safety and initial response when disaster strikes. Members of the Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association have formed a subgroup, the Government Relations Committee (GRC), to address legislative and regulatory issues relating to portable fire extinguishers and pre-engineered systems. The GRC's main goals focus on helping to educate officials by advancing a balanced fire safety philosophy that reflects the need for both sprinklers and portable extinguishers. This newsletter is published periodically to communicate to key members of the fire services and code officials on the importance of balanced fire safety and the role that special application fire suppression systems and portable extinguishers play.