

Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association

Saving Lives, Protecting Property

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Extinguisher Update

International Code Council
Votes to Remove 906.1
Exception in 2012 IFC..... 1

Extinguisher Success Stories

Worker Uses Extinguisher To
Prevent Major Damage 2

Fast Response Averts Tragedy 2

Employees Put Out Fire
Caused By Welding Sparks 2

Teen Puts Out Library Blaze 2

Motorists Save Two Men 2

Residents Help Woman
Escape Apartment Fire 3

Safety Equipment Prevents
Major Damage 3



CHAIN OF SURVIVAL



International Code Council Votes to Remove Extinguisher Exception 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.

— continued on back page

“ 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. ”

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

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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, February 1, 2010*



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.



Fast response averts tragedy in Yankton fire

—*Associated Press, Yankton, SD, April 21, 2010*

School officials came to the rescue of three children who were inside a sport utility vehicle when a fire broke out. Lincoln Principal Paul Struck heard one of the children crying and was able to get them safely out of the vehicle. Bus driver Dennis Sundleaf used a fire extinguisher to stop the flames from spreading.



Employees put out welding fire with extinguisher

—*The Island Packet, Beaufort, SC, May 28, 2010*

On May 28th a welder ignited the insulation between the building’s fourth floor and roof, filling the floor with smoke. Beaufort firefighters were called to the building at 11:30 a.m., but workers were able to put the fire out with a fire extinguisher before firefighters arrived. No injuries were reported.



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.”



Passing motorists save two men after I-664 crash in Chesapeake

—*The Virginian-Pilot, Norfolk, VA, October 2, 2009*

On October 2nd, a Dodge Viper left the road, hit a tree and caught fire. A tractor-trailer driver and another man spotted the flaming vehicle and stopped to help the two men inside the car.

The tractor-trailer driver grabbed a fire extinguisher and kept the flames from spreading while the other man pulled the men out of the car.



Life-saving action at apartment complex—residents help woman escape blaze

—*Houston Chronicle, Humble TX, February 7, 2010*

Deer Springs Apartments Manager Ruby Ramey was in her office when resident Nelda Aulonacli called in a confused state, and told Ms. Ramey that her apartment was on fire and that she needed help. Ramey acted quickly, asking a visitor to call the fire department while she ran to Ms. Aulonacli's apartment on the opposite side of the project. On the way, Ruby saw apartment resident David Porter and asked him to get a fire extinguisher.

Ramey entered Aulonacli's apartment to help her outside. Porter, who had trained as a Citizens Emergency Response Team volunteer, arrived at the apartment with a fire extinguisher. "Mr. Porter located the fire and extinguished it," said Humble Fire Marshal Clinton Johnson. "When the fire department arrived moments later the fire was out." Johnson added, "Ms. Ramey's and Mr. Porter's actions likely saved a life and serious damage to the apartments."



Safety equipment prevents major fire damage

—*The Island Packet, Hilton Head, SC, February 22, 2010*

While cooking with oil in their condo, two Hilton Head residents briefly stepped out of the room. When they returned, they found flames on the stove. The husband remembered a fire extinguisher was just outside the apartment. He grabbed it and extinguished the fire.

"His quick thinking and the placement of a working fire extinguisher resulted in no loss of life and very little damage," according to an official at the Hilton Head Island Fire and Rescue Division.

“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.”

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

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.

Extinguisher Exception, continued from page 1

Alan Shuman, President of 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 of the 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, 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, the California Fire Chiefs Association along with numerous state and regional associations.

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.

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F94-09/10
906.1 (IBC [F] 906.1)

Proposed Change as Submitted

Proponent: Robert J Davidson, Code Consultant/Alan Shuman, President, representing the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM)

Revise as follows:

906.1 (IBC [F] 906.1) Where required. Portable fire extinguishers shall be installed in the following locations.

1. In new and existing Group A, B, E, F, H, I, M, R-1, R-2, R-4 and S occupancies.

~~**Exception:** In new and existing Group A, B and E occupancies equipped throughout with quick response sprinklers, portable fire extinguishers shall be required only in locations specified in Items 2 through 6.~~

2. Within 30 feet (9144 mm) of commercial cooking equipment.
3. In areas where flammable or *combustible liquids* are stored, used or dispensed.
4. On each floor of structures under construction, except Group R-3 occupancies, in accordance with Section 1415.1.
5. Where required by the sections indicated in Table 906.1.
6. Special-hazard areas, including but not limited to laboratories, computer rooms and generator rooms, where required by the *fire code official*.

Reason: Fire extinguishers have historically been the first line of defense for small, controllable fires. They are intended to be used for fires of limited size and easily controlled. If a fire is discovered in its early stages the most effective means of protecting life and preventing property loss is to sound an alarm and then to control and/or extinguish the incipient stage fire with a portable fire extinguisher. To simply wait for the fire to grow to size large enough for a sprinkler head to activate is contrary to lessons and guidance from the fire service and fire protection professionals. Since fire extinguishers provide a first line of defense vs. sprinklers, it remains unclear as to the justification for this exception. In that light, the Exception 1 to Section 906.1 should be deleted.

This exception was not in the original draft of the International Fire Code and it did not exist in any of the legacy fire codes. It currently does not exist in NFPA 1 Uniform Fire Code, NFPA 10 Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers or NFPA 5000 Building Construction and Safety Code. It first appeared in the Final Draft of the 2000 editions of the IFC/IBC. Since the first publication of the International Fire Code, some fire service and fire protection professionals have expressed concern over the inclusion of an exception.

As a result a number of states have deleted the exception upon adoption of the IFC/IBC.

12 States plus Washington D.C. and New York City have Deleted Line 1 Exception.

2 States have amended Section 906.1 and the exception to require more extinguishers

2 States use both NFPA 1 and the IFC with more stringent code applicable.

17 additional States have adopted NFPA 1 as their fire code instead of the IFC.

A total of 33 State jurisdictions and an unknown number of local jurisdictions have chosen to delete the exception in favor of providing the ability to control a fire at its earliest stages.

There are other issues with this exception that have arisen since states have now been adopting the IFC and enforcing it within their state. Some examples are:

The exception is not being interpreted correctly and as a result is not being limited to occupancies with "QUICK RESPONSE" sprinklers installed. Instead, it is being applied in all cases where "REGULAR" sprinklers are installed.

When an occupancy is being renovated and the sprinkler system is updated, presently installed extinguishers are being removed, lessening the level of protection available.

Fire code officials do not all see hazard areas the same and as a result Section 906.1, Item 6 is not consistently applied jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Some officials are exempting all extinguishers from being required thereby placing the occupants in danger at the time of a fire.

An added detriment is that if a building is occupied without fire extinguishers the ability of the building owner to properly and effectively place fire extinguishers is negatively impacted by the practical difficulty of installing fire extinguisher cabinets. Walls may not be thick enough for recessing the cabinets to keep the fire extinguishers from being obstructions to travel or from being hit and damaged themselves. If the walls and partitions can handle the recessed cabinets, design drawings and permits may be required to modify the walls and partitions.

This proposal will eliminate the exception and provide for the proper placement of an important firefighting tool.

Cost Impact: The code change proposal will cause a cost increase in new construction.

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