

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 127: 1920 (RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIRE PAILS)

By Richard Schulte

The Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in early May 1920 at the Insurance Exchange in Chicago, Illinois. Among the committee reports heard at this meeting was the Report of Committee on Field Practice. The Chairman of this Committee, Edward R. Hardy, presented the report. The following is an excerpt from the Report addressing the use of "fire pails" as "first aid" fire protection:

"SECTION I.—FIRE PAILS (WATER).

A pail of water if used at the start of a fire is ordinarily one of the best fire extinguishers yet devised, and it may easily be more effective than the work of the entire fire department five minutes later. It is inexpensive and easily maintained. Its use is understood by every one.

Pails should be of an approved type, of twelve quarts capacity and have chimbs or other means of insuring a good grip. A pail considerably longer than its diameter gives better control. It should be painted red and prominently marked "FIRE" or "FOR FIRE ONLY."

Casks of water of fifty gallons, with five pails, or a bucket tank, may be used and prove more suitable than pails alone.

[TEXT OMITTED]

Distribution:

- (a) *Unit of Installation: Five pails are considered a unit.*
- (b) *Area per Unit: Pails should be provided in the proportion of 5 pails for every 2500 sq. ft. of floor area, figuring each room, gallery, mezzanine, etc., separately.*

- (c) *Arrangement: Pails should be conspicuously located, readily accessible and so distributed as to be immediately available in event of fire. They should be set not higher than five feet nor less than two feet from the floor.*

We no longer utilize “fire pails” for fire protection purposes, but it is interesting to see that the use of “fire pails” was still being recommended in 1920.

As they say, “timing is everything”. A bucket of water used early on in a fire will many times be much more effective than the best equipped fire department arriving 5 minutes after ignition.

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Source: *“Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual [NFPA] Meeting”*, Chicago, Illinois, 1920.