

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 192: 1920 (CARBON TETRACHLORIDE)

By Richard Schulte

Carbon tetrachloride (Halon 104) was utilized as a fire extinguishing agent during the first half of the 20th Century. The use of this agent as a fire extinguishing agent was addressed at the 24th Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association held in Chicago in May 1920. The following is an excerpt from the Report of Committee on Field Practice addressing the use of this agent for fire extinguishing purposes:

“Mr. Dana: Under section VI, I believe there should be more caution as to the use of carbon tetrachloride. Under "maintenance," in this section it says that care should be taken to ventilate small rooms and confined spaces after using this type of extinguisher. Our attention recently was called by an electrical concern to the fact that it had a good deal of trouble in using carbon tetrachloride on account of poisonous gases given off. We have made an investigation of this subject and believe that further caution should be given on account of chlorine gas and hydrochloric acid, which may be given off, especially under damp conditions; and particularly in the case of acid plants, where a combination of carbon tetrachloride and sulphuric or nitric acid may give phosgene gas, one of the deadliest gases used in the war. It should be clearly brought out, that these extinguishers are dangerous under certain conditions.”

Despite the fact that toxic chemical compounds are generated when carbon tetrachloride is exposed to high temperatures, carbon tetrachloride was utilized as a fire extinguishing agent in the United States well into the 1950's.

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Richard C. Schulte

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