

**FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 205: 1904
(FIRE EXTINGUISHING AGENTS-STEAM)**

By Richard Schulte

The eighth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in New York in May 1904. Among the topics discussed at the meeting was the fire record of sprinkler protection and the causes for sprinkler protection failures. During the course of this discussion, the use of steam as an extinguishing agent was addressed. Later in the meeting, the report of the Committee investigating the use of steam jets for fire extinguishing purposes was read.

The following is a transcript of the discussion regarding the use of steam jets for fire extinguishing purposes:

***Mr. Chittenden.** Referring to 2786, may I ask whether the chairman of the committee considers that sprinklers in lumber dry kilns are effectual, or may be, in controlling fires?*

***Mr. Fiske.** I think that is covered under "Remarks of interest." The idea we intend to convey in those remarks is that a sprinkler system sometimes is and sometimes is not effectual in dry kilns. Where the obstruction is as severe as it is in many dry rooms sprinklers cannot be a positive control in the general sense of sprinkler protection. We have a number of fires where sprinklers have done excellent work in lumber houses, and others where they have failed to hold the fire.*

***Mr. Chittenden.** Do you think steam jets add to the protection?*

***Mr. Fiske.** We have, I believe, a special committee on steam jet protection. The number of fires where such jets have been used to advantage are comparatively small, and I am really not able to give any opinion on the matter.*

[TEXT OMITTED]

Mr. Breed. *In my experience it is very important in a woodworking establishment to have a watchman, even if there is a sprinkler system. He should go around the plant, which usually shuts down at six o'clock, directly after closing, and should look it over and see that there are no hot bearings, which is one prolific cause of fires, and then he should go around again, say at half past nine. I once had charge of a woodworking plant, and I had such a watchman, but after I quit they thought \$3 a week was money thrown away, and so they dismissed him, and in a very short time the mill burned down. In the matter of lumber drying, the trouble there is that the sprinklers don't get at the fire; the lumber is on sticks, and the fire gets in between the boards, so that the spray from the sprinklers can't reach it. The only way, according to my idea, is to have sprinklers in pockets at the sides, so that they would be out of the way, but it would require a very large amount of water then to be of much service in a dry room. I had a steam jet in the dry room I had charge of, and I have no doubt it would have been very effective if I had any occasion to use it.*

[TEXT OMITTED]

Wednesday's Session.

Wednesday, May 25, 1904.

President Hexamer in the chair.

The Secretary read communications from Mr. John B. Laidlaw, Mr. J. L. Brown and Mr. F. J. McFadden.

*The first business in order was the report of the **Committee on Investigation of the Value of the Steam Jet as an Extinguishing Agent**. In the absence of the chairman of the committee, Mr. F. J. McFadden, the report was read by Mr. Tanner. It was as follows:*

Report of the Committee on Investigation of the Value of the Steam Jet as an Extinguishing Agent.

*Your committee beg leave to report that they have secured a good deal of valuable data bearing on this subject, but that, in the main, it is theoretical. We are endeavoring to secure the co-operation of the **Georgia School of Technology**, and, if successful, will then be able to make practical tests. We are also in hopes of securing an abandoned dry kiln. If this can be done we can put to a practical test the amount of steam necessary to extinguish fire.*

We beg to ask that other members of the Association will favor us with any information they may become possessed of in the course of their work. So far very little interest seems to have been taken in the matter.

We beg to ask that the committee be given more time, and we will endeavor, by the next meeting, to bring in a full report, and one which, we trust, will be of interest to all members.

*Respectfully submitted,
F. J. McFadden, Chairman.*

The President. Unless objection is raised the report will be received and printed in the transactions.

In an age of horse-drawn fire apparatus equipped with steam-powered pumps (steamers), it seems only natural that the use of steam as a fire extinguishing agent would be investigated.

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