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FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 70: 1909 (THE 13TH ANNUAL NFPA MEETING/COMMITTEE ON AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS)

By Richard Schulte

After the report by the Committee on Devices and Materials was presented at the 13th annual meeting of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the presentation of the report by the Committee on Automatic Sprinklers followed. The following is the text of the report presented by the Automatic Sprinkler Committee:

“The Chair: The next committee report is that of the Committee on Automatic Sprinklers, E. P. Boone, Chairman.

Mr. Boone: Mr. President and Gentlemen – Your committee has no report to offer at this time, mainly because the chairman, owing to pressure of business, has been unable to devote any time worth mentioning to the subject. Further, it does not appear wise at this time to revise rules and a standard that have been successful operation since 1905, as such revision would apparently have bearing on minor details only. No changes have been suggested by committee members and no meetings have been held.

No communications, bearing on the subject, have been received, except one from San Francisco, having reference to the use of red wood as a suitable material for gravity tanks construction, which communication has been transmitted to the Committee on Gravity Tanks; and another from one of the sprinkler installing companies having reference to the careless use of lead or cement in making up pipe joints. The latter, in the eyes of your chairman is a matter to be taken care of in the field by proper inspection and not by printed rules.

Your chairman has also borne in mind the association’s wishes regarding frequent and unnecessary change of rules and its desire to disturb the commercial interests as little as possible. True, there are minor details capable of improvement, but it hardly seems becoming to make such changes at this time, especially when we consider that we are shortly to have rules for the construction of gravity tanks and that a further change will be made necessary when the American Water Works Association changes its standard for cast iron pipe. Upon the adoption of these by this association, it would then appear fitting to make the necessary changes and additions in the automatic sprinkler rules.

If I may be permitted, Mr. President, I would like to add the following remarks bearing on the rules in general.

Something has been said on one or two occasion to the effect that certain rules were not plainly worded and that some change in the phraseology would admit of more intelligent handling, all of which is true. The cuts representing various arrangement of feed mains and risers should either be omitted when the rules are changed or only those illustrating approved methods included.

The question pro and con long bend fittings has long been a sticker to many, although I think most of us are agreed that the long turn are preferable.

The question of hangers is of moment, as well as the protection of concealed W. I. [wrought iron] pipe against corrosion. The latter method of installing sprinkler pipes is growing in favor, particularly in mercantile risks in our large cities.

It would also seem desirable to exclude from the rules all references to tank and pump construction, including in the rules only such matters as pertain to capacity, installation, care, and maintenance. We now have rules governing the construction of steam, rotary, and electric pumps, and shortly will have those pertaining to gravity tank construction, and it therefore seems proper to refer to such rules rather than to include them in the sprinkler rules.

Some of the members, I am told, are not quite satisfied with the present open sprinkler rules and it might be desirable to have appointed a sub-committee for the purpose of conducting further tests.

I have simply elaborated on some of the matters that have been in the minds of many of us the past year, and which to my mind should be taken into careful consideration when the rules are changed. (Applause.)

The Chair: Gentlemen, you have before you the report of the Automatic Sprinkler Committee, which practically contains the recommendation that no change be made in the rules at this meeting. I think it might be in order to refer these suggestions of the chairman of the Committee on Automatic Sprinklers.

Moved that the report be accepted and the suggestion be referred to the Automatic Sprinkler Committee.

Motion seconded and unanimously adopted.”

While the sprinkler committee’s report contains little in the way of interest from a technical standpoint, it is interesting to note the reference to the philosophy of the NFPA regarding technical changes to its standards.

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