

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 88: 1913 (FIRE PREVENTION INSPECTIONS)

By Richard Schulte

One of the topics discussed at the National Fire Prevention Convention held in Philadelphia in October 1913 was the need for fire prevention inspections to insure compliance with fire safety regulations. The following is an excerpt from a presentation at the Convention by Herman L. Ekern, the Commissioner of Insurance in the State of Wisconsin:

*“The prime necessity in the way of legislation is some provision for **frequent periodical inspections of all property by public authority**, either State or municipal, but under the ultimate supervision and direction of State authority. For purposes of economy as well as for convenience in organization, the direct work of inspection might best be left to the local municipal authorities, preferably the fire departments. **This need involve but little additional expense to the present budgets.** Such inspections by members of the fire department would keep the force occupied, improve discipline, and keep the members informed of the exact condition on premises where their services might be required. A permanent record should be made of every inspection, and a copy furnished to the owner at the time of the inspection. This should show specifically the hazardous condition to be remedied. The records of the inspections should be kept in permanent files, which should be the property of the State authorities supervising the inspections.”*

Since the National Fire Prevention Convention held in 1913, we have worked diligently to develop fire safety provisions for new building construction, but we have failed to implement the recommendation for periodic maintenance inspections to verify that fire protection features originally provided in buildings are being properly maintained. Just what is the point of mandating fire protection features in new building construction if there is no mechanism to verify that these legally mandated features are being properly maintained?

Periodic fire prevention inspections are just as important as inspections of new buildings while they are being constructed.

Source: “Official Record of the First American National Fire Prevention Convention”, Powell Evans, Editor, pages 286-290, 1914.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=bwIOAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:
%22American+National+Fire+Prevention+Convention.+1st,+Philadelphia,+1913%22&hl
=en&sa=X&ei=-RnLUJqkFefdyAGkxoHwBw&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=bwIOAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22American+National+Fire+Prevention+Convention.+1st,+Philadelphia,+1913%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-RnLUJqkFefdyAGkxoHwBw&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

* * * * *