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AN INFORMAL INTERPRETATION: SPRINKLERS AND ROOF VENTS

June 20, 2011:

“Ladies and Gentlemen-

Chapter 11 in the next edition of NFPA 204 will include provisions for the use of roof vents and draft curtains in buildings protected by a sprinkler system. Section A.11.4.2 in NFPA 204 (see below) discusses and recommends the use of the concept of "ganged" roof vent operation.

Chapter 11 in the next edition of NFPA 204 appears to be in conflict with the provisions for the use of roof vents/draft curtains contained in NFPA 13 (based upon the substantiation statement from the proposal for the roof vent provisions). Given this, I would appreciate your comments on the following questions:

Is it the intent of the roof vent provisions contained in NFPA 13 (2010 edition) to prohibit the automatic "ganged" operation of roof vents in buildings protected by a sprinkler system?

Is it the intent of the roof vent provisions contained in NFPA 13 (2010 edition) to prohibit manually-activated "ganged" operation of roof vents in buildings protected by a sprinkler system?

*Richard Schulte
Schulte & Associates”*

June 24, 2011:

“Mr. Schulte,

NFPA 13, 2010 edition addresses your issue in §12.1.1.1 Manually operated roof vents or automatic roof vents with operating elements that have a higher temperature classification than the automatic sprinklers shall be permitted.*

A.12.1.1.1 Sprinkler protection criteria are based on the assumption that roof vents and draft curtains are not being used. (See Section C.6.)

Sincerely,

Bob Caputo, CFPS, CET
Fire Protection Specialist
NFPA Consultant

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Discussion

Although Mr. Caputo did not respond directly with a yes or no answer, the response above is clear. Roof vents in buildings protected by a sprinkler system must either be manual in operation or individually-activated automatic roof vents with an activating element one temperature classification higher than the temperature classification of the sprinklers.

Individually-activated automatic roof vents with an activating element one temperature classification higher than the temperature classification of the sprinklers will not open if the sprinkler system is adequate for the hazard protected and the system operates. Hence, individually-activated automatic roof vents complying with the provisions for roof vents contained in the 2010 edition of NFPA 13 are the same as manual roof vents in this scenario.

Since there are only two alternatives permitted for roof vent installation, it can be concluded that the “ganged” operation of roof vents, regardless of whether the “ganged” operation of vents is activated manually or automatically would not be permitted by NFPA 13.

Given that NFPA 204, *the Standard for Smoke and Heat Venting*, recommends the concept of the “ganged” operation of roof vents be utilized, it can be concluded that NFPA 13 and NFPA 204 are in conflict.

NFPA formal interpretation to follow.

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