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CORRECTION: THE FIRST TALL BUILDING PROTECTED THROUGHOUT BY SPRINKLERS (AND BOCA 100)

By Richard Schulte

In previous articles on sprinkler protection and high rise buildings which have appeared on this website, it was noted that the Sears Tower was the first tall building protected throughout by a sprinkler system. It appears that this statement is incorrect and that the Transamerica Building in San Francisco was actually the first tall building to be protected throughout by a sprinkler system.

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The construction of the Transamerica Building commenced in December, 1969 and the building was completed in the summer of 1972. Construction on the Sears Tower began in April 1971 and the building was completed in May, 1973.

The conceptual design of the sprinkler system provided for the Transamerica Building was developed by Richard Patton. The sprinkler system protecting the Transamerica Building is constructed using copper tubing, rather than steel piping.

Richard Patton was one of the authors of an alternative sprinkler system design standard, the Standard for the Design and Installation of Fire Suppression System[s] for Life Safety, **BOCA 100**, published by Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) in 1975.

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Richard Patton was one of the principal advocates of the concept of using sprinklers to protect building occupants from fire in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Patton also advocated the development of fast response sprinklers at that time and is widely credited with the development of the concept of sprinkler protection for dwellings.

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Like others leaders in the field of fire protection in the late 1960's and early 1970's, such as Chester Schirmer, Rolf Jensen and Harold Nelson, Richard Patton was a product of the fire protection engineering program at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago.

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Editor's Note: Richard Schulte is a 1976 graduate of the fire protection and safety engineering program at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago. Schulte worked as the fire protection engineer for the San Jose (California) Fire Department from 1980-1982. Schulte was named as one of ENR's "Top 25 Newsmakers of 2004" by Engineering News-Record for his work on critiquing the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) investigation into the collapse of the World Trade Center towers on 9/11.