

The HOT Spot

Every job is different. Of course, some jobs are fairly straightforward, like outfitting a building with the required number of portable extinguishers or reassembling the pull pins and tamper seals on an extinguisher before charging. Other times, a job requires a lot of time and attention and the unexpected crops up. Every fire equipment company, large or small, has faced down a tough job now and then. With this in mind, members were asked:

What is the most challenging job you have ever faced as a fire equipment distributor? Please describe the job and how you accomplished it.



Tom Farruggia
Illinois Fire & Safety Company
Addison, Illinois

As I think back over the years, I could cite numerous fire system projects that provided some serious challenges in design and/or installation for our firm. However, one of the more interesting projects we tackled in recent years was a paint spray operation. Our customer manufactured large dust collection housings that required painting after production. These housings were too large to paint within a commercially available spray booth.

We resolved the problem by treating the whole 45' L x 31' W x 15' H room in which the housings were to be painted as a "spray room," per NFPA 33. Since there was no sprinkler system in the building, we protected this large spray room, as well as the large plenum and exhaust duct located on the far end of the room, with an auto-

matic dry chemical fire suppression system. Both our customer and the local fire officials were very happy with the economical, but effective, fire protection solution we provided.

Ken May
Silco Fire Protection Co.
Akron, Ohio

Having been in the systems side of the business for so many years has provided me with numerous challenging projects but the one that led to most of my hair loss is the 12-ton low pressure CO₂ system project for two 1000 foot oil tanker ships. The project was in Oregon, the tanks were fabricated in Georgia, and I am in Ohio. There was a \$100,000(+) per day penalty clause in the contract that would be invoked if our scope of work delayed the ship sailing on its scheduled date. Manufacturing delays, delivery delays caused by weather, CO₂ fill-

ing problems (at one time we considered lifting the bulk CO₂ tanker truck onto the ship deck until we found a supplier with a big enough pump to fill from the dock), testing and approval issues, etc., etc., led to sleepless nights and exhausting days. The bottom line is we received final approvals the morning of the scheduled departure. Welcome to the systems side of the business.

John Martinez
Mid Valley Automatic Fire
Walnut, California

I received a call one morning from the largest glass manufacturing plant in California to report a fire which caused a loss in excess of \$1,000,000. They asked me to come to the plant immediately for an emergency meeting.

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Upon arrival, I entered a room full of corporate people with all eyes on me. The first question posed was “John, can you or can you not take care of our fire protection needs?” Complaints started flowing—from an extinguisher that was used and didn’t work properly, to a fire hose that had more water out of the back end than from the nozzle, to a booster hose that had a dislocated nozzle.

As you can imagine, I was taken aback thinking of the exposure and liability my company would be confronting. When I was finally given the opportunity to explain, the following was revealed: The fire extinguisher didn’t work because it was the wrong extinguisher for the type of fire. The fire hose was being used to wash down broken glass that was involved in the fire. The booster hose was the same one we had recommended replacing three months prior. I also informed them that we had recommended, numerous times, that they have a fire demonstration, which they

hadn’t done in over twenty years. The question changed from, “Can you take care of our fire protection?” to “What do we need to do, John?”

I’m glad to report that after ten weeks of Thursday morning meetings they have spent the money to meet all fire protection requirements to keep their plant safe.

George Seymour
Total Safety US, Inc.
Houston, Texas

A few years ago, we had a customer with two large (50' x 280') warehouses storing hazardous flammable waste, plus loading and processing areas. Codes required both detection and automatic suppression. To make matters more challenging, all water used in fire suppression must be contained within the facility, collected, and treated as hazardous waste. One of our competitors presented standard sprinkler systems/fire pumps with huge water retention tanks to contain the thousands of gallons of water

for any fire situation. After research, we provided and installed a fire pump to power several high expansion foam systems, complete with detection and control (all in accordance with NFPA standards and local codes). Provisions were made to have the fire panel monitored and able to summon the fire department with a response time of less than five minutes. Although very costly, this approved design and installation was about 35 percent of the cost of the water system and water retention system. In addition, on discharge only a few hundred gallons of water were used, rather than the thousands from a sprinkler discharge, reducing cleanup and downtime. Our system was installed and approved by the local fire department. There have been at least two fires in the facilities since installation, both of which were successfully extinguished by this system prior to fire department arrival. ♦