

The HOT Spot

As the early 90s seem to be coming back into style these days, *Firewatch!* is more than overdue for the revamping of a previous feature titled "Members' Forum." This time around, however, we're going with the name "The Hot Spot," as this will be the best spot for members to vent on hot topics affecting our industry.

The burning topic for this issue is Underwriters Laboratories' announcement that it will be withdrawing its listings under the UL 1093 standard on September 29, 2009. This means portable Halon 1211 fire extinguishers will no longer be produced with a UL Listing Mark. According to UL, extinguishers already in service can remain in service as long as they can be maintained and inspected in accordance with the maintenance manual and NFPA 10. So we asked:

With the recent announcement that UL will no longer provide a listing mark for Halon 1211 fire extinguishers after September 29, 2009, how do you predict this will affect your business and what steps do you plan on taking?



Michael R. Willis II
Haines City Fire Extinguisher Service, Inc.
Winter Haven, Florida

With the removal of the UL listing set for next year, we feel that this will not have an enormous impact on our business. Since the original EPA restrictions on Halon several years ago, we had begun to find alternatives for our customers and helped them choose a suitable replacement at that time. Since then, we have sold Halotron to customers requiring a clean agent type extinguisher where Halon had been the preferred extinguishing agent.

Since we were already somewhat prepared, we do not have an inventory to worry about depleting, and our Halon closed-recovery system was replaced earlier this year with a Halotron closed-recovery system.

We feel that by properly educating your customers, not using the UL scare tactics some have used in the past with extin-

guishers that lost their listing, and working out a replacement program with the customers that have Halon units that will require maintenance, this will be a great opportunity to up-sell and to change your bottom line.

You can also benefit by selling the agent, in the extinguisher(s) that you replaced, to one of our NAFED supplier member companies that recycle Halon and support those that support NAFED!

Tim Krulan
Cintas Fire Protection
Ledgewood, New Jersey

From a sales standpoint, the introduction of new clean agents and other alternatives over the past 10+ years has moved the focus away from selling new Halon 1211 extinguishers as the primary choice for a clean agent extinguisher.

This announcement will have the biggest effect on our ability to continue

servicing Halon 1211 extinguishers in the market to meet the original manufacturer's listing. Original equipment parts may become more costly and/or more difficult to find as manufacturers choose to discontinue the production of replacement parts and cease to provide support for these units (similar to the way they have with pre-UL 300 systems.) As a company, we will have to decide when to completely discontinue servicing Halon 1211 extinguishers based on availability of parts and recharge chemicals.

We have faced a similar situation with pre-1984 dry chemical extinguishers and have worked with our customers on replacement programs to cycle equipment that is no longer serviceable, replacing them with the appropriate new equipment for the hazard protected. The Halon 1211 extinguishers will be treated no differently. Once we can no longer service and maintain the units according to manufacturer's

listing, customers will be offered the best replacement option available. We will continue to consult with our customers to help them select the appropriate extinguisher for their hazards.

John Gioseffi

*Broward Fire Equipment and Service Inc.
Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

I believe UL's recent announcement that they will not provide a listing mark for Halon 1211 portable fire extinguishers after September 29, 2009 will have very little impact on my business. Any impact that does occur should be positive, re-enforcing the policies Broward Fire Equipment established and initiated in the early 1990s when the Halon phase-out began.

Broward still services Halon 1211 fire extinguishers, but we see fewer and fewer Halon extinguishers every month (down to 7 Halon units serviced in October 2008, compared to 22 units in October 2007). Since the beginning of the Halon and ozone depletion issue, we have tried to educate and advise our customers on the future of Halon and their fire protection requirements.

Although Halon has been and still is available, it is an ozone depleting substance and deemed to be not environmentally friendly. Our industry must admit, in its heyday Halon was oversold and installed to protect hazards that would have been better protected by other agents. For the last fifteen years we have tried to direct our customers to the best, most efficient fire extinguishing agent for their particular hazard as a replacement for Halon 1211 extinguishers. With the current choice of agents

available, including Halogenated agents that have zero ODP and are lower in toxicity than Halon, the normal consumer will not be adversely affected, in terms of fire protection, by the elimination of the UL listing for Halon 1211 extinguishers.

John Lawlor

*Keystone Fire Protection Co.
Montgomeryville, Pennsylvania*

My initial reaction to the news of the delisting of Halon 1211 extinguishers was one of concern that we were seeing another example of government intervention into our businesses. However, after having reviewed the memo on UL 1093 and the withdrawal of all UL listings under the categories of liquified-gas type extinguishers and marine liquified-gas type extinguishers, I'm comfortable that this action is in the best interests of the industry and the public. Production of UL-listed 1211 extinguishers will cease after September 29, 2009, but existing units can stay in service as long as they can continue to be serviced and maintained in accordance with NFPA 10 and the manufacturer's maintenance guidelines. The industry has seen the introduction of a number of different replacement technologies—water mist, FE-36, and Halotron—that now enjoy strong market acceptance. So, when faced with the news of the market phase-out of Halon 1211, I feel that we have more and better solutions, today, to offer our customers. ♦