

Rising Professionals Under

40

Like it or not, we're facing an industry that is shifting into the next generation as many of our leaders age into retirement. Who will be the leaders of the next decade? What are their goals and how will they help the industry reach new heights?

We plan to feature some of our future leaders here in *Firewatch*. Do you know a great under-40 professional? Let us know and we will profile them. Provide contact information to the editor at tamaram@nafed.org and give your under-40 a heads up that they've been nominated. We'll do the rest!

Years in industry: 3.

How did you start in the industry? It's a really funny story! I studied for my bachelor's in communications, interned with a minor league baseball team, and met a good friend while there. Turns out her parents have a fire protection company and were looking for someone to start up their social media part-time. Fast forward to today... I taught myself how to use computer-aided drafting (CAD) software, have taken fire alarm design courses, aid the president of the company with permits and fire alarm estimates, provide customer service, and more!

What do you like about working in fire protection? I love the variety of the day-to-day while working in fire protection! Whether it's "field trips" to properties, helping customers, laying out fire alarm plans, or picking up a new skill, it's truly a different day, EVERY DAY. I was always someone who craved variety in their job and Alarm Tech gives me that! This is never something I would have guessed I would be doing, but the field is so special, and I can truly say that what I do helps to keep people safe.

What do you think your generation can bring to the industry? In my area the fire protection field is dominated by Generation X or older, primarily men. I feel honored to be a woman in fire protection helping to provide clients with modern, safe, and up-to-date equipment and fire protection systems. I've been lucky enough to witness some really amazing systems being crafted by our team and integrated with suppression equipment installed by our sister company Alarm Tech Suppression, Inc. These are the types of projects that I think our generation can continue to build on and progress, and I'm so excited I get to help be a part of that growth!

How do you imagine the state of the industry thirty years from now? It's amazing to think about what fire protection looked like three decades ago and what it looks like now. I hope the industry is only going to keep improving and growing like it has over the last thirty years. I think systems will continue to become more integrated and with technological improvements will come a younger generation of fire protection professionals. It's a field many people don't think about or consider when planning a career, but life and property safety is important for every functioning organization. The necessity for fire protection will be a constant, and I hope with that in mind younger generations will work to advance and build this amazing field.



Courtney Kling
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Fire Alarm and CAD
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trative Assistant

Years in industry:
8, with no end in sight!

How did you start in the industry? Back in October 2012, I was working part time for the local Park and Rec department teaching young children different team sports. I got a call from a friend of mine wondering if I was available to walk around a building every thirty minutes to make sure nothing was on fire (I learned later that the official name of this task was firewatch). After those duties had been fulfilled, I was invited to work part time at Metro Safety and Fire's office doing some light-duty paperwork and organizing. On January 2, 2013, I was offered a full-time position as Accounts Receivable. At that point, the industry had made its way into my blood. In the last eight years, I've had the opportunity to work in all arenas of our operation and am thrilled to have landed my latest role as the Field Operations Manager with an employee-owned company.

What do you like about working in fire protection? There are so many reasons to love this industry. The fulfilled feeling knowing that the work you are a part of makes a difference. Being a piece of the puzzle when a client's system operates as designed and installed in the event of a fire. Saving lives and property is the name of the game, and that's what makes it exciting and motivational to show up every day. The absolutely diverse, brilliant, wonderful humans in the industry that are a pleasure to work with and get to know. Meeting people from across the country at different events, namely the NAFED conference, and learning about how other jurisdictions are navigating compliance engines, codes, and fire marshals. The willingness to share knowledge and information with others has been tremendous. And, of course, passing all of the information that we gain on to the general population. They say "knowledge is power," and that couldn't ring truer for this industry.

What do you think your generation can bring to the industry? I have high hopes for this generation to fine tune the technology that is being introduced to the industry. A huge win in this respect are the wireless alarm devices hitting the scene. More streamlined reporting, better customer-facing portals, and ease of access would make lives easier across the board. A rather large win for us FEDs would be a single compliance reporting system to submit reports to. The foundation is set; we need to keep it solid, healthy, safe, and exciting enough to get the next generation involved.

How do you imagine the state of the industry thirty years from now? As we have learned time and time again, anything is possible. Fire protection appears to be headed in a more automated direction. With breakthroughs like the introduction of the E-Bulb (www.e-bulb.com) for small electronics and heat-directed sprinkler heads, the margin for human error has potential to decrease. This may be a little far-fetched, but how awesome would PEX sprinkler systems be? Also, what about addressable systems that report directly to a client's phone? The opportunity for growth and efficiency is endless. ■



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