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We, as active members of the National Association of Fire Equipment Distributors, recognize that the products and services we provide have a significant impact on the quality of life for the entire public. As we perform our services, we will demonstrate the highest level of professionalism, personal integrity, and competence. Accordingly, we adhere to the NAFED Code of Ethics, which states:

- We will fulfill our obligations to our clients in an efficient and competent manner and with complete honesty.
- We undertake to provide only those services for which we are competent by way of education, training, and experience.
- We strive to maintain our proficiency by a process of continually updating our knowledge and skills.
- We strive to adhere to all established codes and standards relevant to the products and services we provide. We do not attempt to misuse codes and standards or the process by which these codes and standards are created.
- We strive to follow all instructions established by the manufacturers of the equipment we provide or service.
- We will analyze the needs of our clients completely and professionally, and make honest recommendations to fulfill those needs based on all available information.
- We strive to warn of any condition we notice that may affect the safety, health, and well-being of our clients, their property, and their employees.
- We will keep confidential and will not misuse the proprietary business information and trade secrets of our clients.
- We will conduct ourselves in a dignified and professional manner. We will admit and accept our own errors when proven wrong. We will not distort or alter the facts in an attempt to justify our decisions.
- We recognize that we are invited into our clients’ facilities and will conduct ourselves in a safe and professional manner. We will treat our clients’ goods and property with the highest regard.
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100% of respondents to our customer surveys said they would use us again for their recycling and rebuild needs.

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Laying the Groundwork for NAFED’s Future

By Tim Krulan

A lot of members are aware of the work NAFED’s leadership does on the conferences, but have you ever wondered what staff and the board of directors do the rest of the year? There’s a lot going on year-round at NAFED, but I want to focus here on just one task we have been working on.

The board met in September for the fall board meeting. This year we also worked a day and half on strategic initiatives. It’s been a few years since the strategic plan has been updated, and we felt it was time to revisit it and plan where NAFED will be heading for the next several years. We reviewed the membership survey, the current strategic plan, and other information to start the strategic initiatives exercise.

The board of directors analyzed the association’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats so that we can position the association to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing members over the next several years. We spent time looking at all of these while keeping NAFED’s mission statement as a guide: “Make our members successful by continuously improving the economic environment, business performance, and technical competence in the fire protection industry.”

From the work we did, we identified the following as some of the strategic objectives that we will begin working on as your trade association:

1) Enhance members’ technical competency and professionalism.
   a) Expand training offerings and materials
   b) Small business training and development programs
2) Increase the general awareness of what NAFED is and what our members do.
   a) Increase marketing of our industry
   b) Increase involvement with AHJ organizations
3) Increase both NAFED and member longevity.
   a) Engage future leaders within the association
   b) Continue to influence codes and standards
4) Increase the ability of our industry to attract talent.
   a) Work to develop internship programs
   b) Develop industry-related job fair material for members
   c) Increase the adoption of NAFED certification
   d) Increase the adoption of NAFED certification
   e) Enhance the NAFED website

If all of this seems like a lot of work, it will be! In my last article I encouraged you to get involved in NAFED by volunteering your time on committee work. Well I am asking again!

If you would like to assist the board with these initiatives, please contact either Danny Harris at the NAFED offices or me directly and we will find a place for you to assist.

Tim Krulan is NAFED’s president and president of New Jersey Fire Equipment LLC of Rockaway, New Jersey.
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A Permanent Fix for Sprinkler System Leaks

By Aaron Dickens

Sometimes I wonder, if I were to stop ten people on the street and ask them to name the trades needed to construct a commercial building whether any of them would name fire protection. As part of the fire protection industry, we live with an interesting dynamic; we design, install, and maintain systems that under ideal circumstances will not be needed. With that level of anonymity, our industry is often misunderstood or maligned as being an unwanted cost associated with operating a facility.

When I look objectively at the situation, I can say that I see their point. If my exposure to fire protection was limited to paying for inspections and service calls to repair leaks that disrupted my business and damaged my building and products, I would likely have a different opinion about fire protection. In my experience, the most common frustration that I hear from building owners and operators always revolves around sprinkler system leaks.

One of the most prolific challenges that our industry has faced since we began installing fire sprinkler systems in steel pipe is internal corrosion. While as an industry we have known that there is an issue, only recently has the root cause (oxygen) been identified along with a true solution—removal of the trapped oxygen.

For many years the standard industry approach to dealing with sprinkler system leaks was to replace the leaking section of pipe. When the frequency or cost of repair reached an intolerable level, we would recommend complete system replacement. Over the last ten years significant research has been conducted to show that the majority of leaks in fire sprinkler systems are due to oxygen corrosion. No longer is Microbiologically Influenced Corrosion (MIC) considered a significant factor in system corrosion. Further, research has shown that oxygen corrosion is highly localized to areas where there is an air–water interface. These areas include high points in wet systems where trapped air accumulates and low points in dry or preaction systems where water accumulates.

Now that we truly understand the factors involved with internal corrosion in fire sprinkler systems, we can as an industry begin implementing a remedy by addressing the source of oxygen in these systems instead of treating systems as a collection of disposable parts and continuously replacing sprinkler piping.

For wet systems, the 2016 edition of NFPA 13 now requires that a single air vent shall be provided on each wet pipe system utilizing metallic pipe. The means of venting can be as simple as a ½ inch ball valve located near the high point of the system; however, several manufacturers make automatic vents which carry the added benefit of not having to locate and manually open a valve each time the system is filled.

When evaluating automatic air vents there are two categories: single vents and redundant vents. The single vents are often recommended to be piped to a drain or other suitable location in case the vent fails and discharges water. Redundant vents eliminate the requirement to pipe to drain by providing a second fail-safe device to ensure that if the primary venting mechanism fails water is not discharged. When evaluating redundant vents it is useful to note if the vent has an indicating feature that allows the status of the primary vent valve to be visible from the floor.
Congratulations to Paul Martin, the Fire Equipment Manufacturers’ Association’s 2018 Life Safety Advocate of the Year award recipient. As a leader in fire safety, we thank Paul for his dedication to improving fire code safety standards and advancing fire safety education. During his nearly 40-year fire service career, Paul has served in multiple line and administration positions, and is active with the National Association of State Fire Marshals and the International Code Council. Prior to his storied career, Paul also served as a firefighter with the U.S. Navy.

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When addressing dry or preaction systems, the goal is still the same—to eliminate oxygen from the pipe network—although the approach is slightly different. Dry and preaction systems still require a vent to remove the oxygen from the pipe network; however, because these systems require supervisory pressure the traditional air compressor should be replaced with a nitrogen generator. Nitrogen generators use nitrogen separation technology, usually membrane based, which separates nitrogen molecules from a compressed air stream providing up to 99.9% pure nitrogen. The mechanism to control corrosion involves replacing the air that contains oxygen with nitrogen gas. Once the gas inside the system is 98% nitrogen or greater, corrosion is effectively stopped.

Again, there are multiple providers of nitrogen systems to the fire protection industry. All of them use a nitrogen generator in conjunction with an oxygen removal vent. When selecting a nitrogen generator provider, I have learned through experience that it is important to ask several questions as the answers will impact the cost and labor associated with installing, operating, and maintaining the equipment.

- Is the unit either FM Approved or UL Listed?
  Many jobs require that equipment be approved or listed for use with the fire protection system.
- Does the nitrogen generator require any ancillary equipment to support it?
Some equipment manufacturers require a nitrogen storage tank and/or a refrigerated air dryer which results in additional equipment cost, installation labor, and electrical coordination.

- Where is equipment required to be installed?
Some equipment manufacturers require their vent to be installed at the fire sprinkler riser, which represents the simplest, most convenient approach. Other equipment manufacturers require their vent to be installed at the end of the system, which potentially requires electrical service to be coordinated at the vent location or gas sample tubing to be run from the vent location to the valve room or wherever the gas monitoring equipment is located. Both of these requirements can represent additional hidden installation cost to the job.

I believe that corrosion control technology offers us an opportunity to be ambassadors for the fire protection industry by showing our customer base that we are committed to bringing them improved technology and processes. What better way to improve the perception of our industry than offering better solutions that result in a lower cost of ownership and a more dependable life safety system.

Aaron Dickens is the vice president of Delta Fire Systems, Inc. in Salt Lake City, Utah, and region six director.
NAFED’s 2018 Annual Report

By Danny Harris

NAFED Mission
Everything NAFED does is designed to help its members be successful by continuously improving the economic environment, business performance, and technical competence in the fire protection industry.

If you want to get involved with NAFED, there are many ways and many benefits. In exchange for your time and support, you will develop new friendships, leadership skills, and enhance your networking opportunities. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Danny Harris at dharris@nafed.org.

Association Objective
The principal objective of NAFED is to gather and disseminate information and ideas which will improve the world’s fire protection and increase the competence of the fire protection industry.

Through this association and the efforts of its members, information relating to the dependability and effectiveness of portable fire equipment, pre-engineered, engineered systems and other life safety equipment, as well as their integral role in life safety and property protection, will be developed and made known to agencies and organizations that are responsible for the formulation and enforcement of the world’s fire codes. Each member of this association acknowledges the responsibility inherent in the sale and maintenance of fire protection equipment and pledges to perform their work and serve their customers with the highest degree of honesty, skill, and integrity that such responsibility infers.

Organization Overview
• Current Membership
  • 990 Distributor Members
  • 75 Branch Members
  • 73 Supplier Members
  • 19 Affiliate Members
  • 60 new members in 2017
  • 61 new members in 2018
  • 90% membership retention
  • Through judicious management, NAFED has been able to sustain its current dues structure for fifteen years.

2018 Projects
• Successfully launched a newly designed website.
• Launched a new online Recharge of Portable Fire Extinguishers training program.
• Worked with the ICC to update all the certification exams with the current editions of the NFPA standards.
• Created a new training partnership program with Brooks Equipment to sponsor the FED Center.
• Continued to support FEMA’s Government Relations Committee by contributing to their ongoing legislative and regulatory issues that affect our industry.

Strategic Initiatives
The Board of Directors met in the fall of 2018 to discuss strategic initiatives for the next two to three years. As the outcome of that meeting, the board committed to work diligently to accomplish the following goals over the next few years.
• Enhance member technical competency and professionalism.
• Increase internal and external NAFED awareness.
• Increase NAFED and industry longevity.
• Increase industry ability to attract talent.

Financial Update
NAFED entered 2018 in a good fiscal position to address changes and challenges we face with membership and other industry-related issues. NAFED total revenue for Fiscal Year 2017 was 2,033,367—an increase of $176,762 over FY2016. Total expenses for FY2017 were 1,906,632—an increase of $142,703 over FY2016. The total net asset (income) for FY2017 was $126,735. Investment income for FY2017 added an additional income of $16,401 compared to $9,496 in FY2016. The Statement of Financial Position for FY2017 indicates NAFED’s total assets were $2,131,858 compared to FY2016 $1,932,517. Additionally, the total liabilities in FY2017 were $337,435, an increase of $53,500 over the previous year.

Danny Harris, CAE, is the executive director/CEO of NAFED.
NAFED 2019 CONFERENCES

GEN $: Building the Team that Boosts Your Bottom Line

Gen Z is entering the workforce. Gen X is moving into leadership. Millennials are perfecting their talents. Baby Boomers are leaving their legacy. Does this signal potential? Or just another multi-generational headache?

Join us at the NAFED Conference. We’ll turn your company into "Gen $" with the perfect blend of education, keynotes, and exhibitors that will build the team that boosts your bottom line.

With NAFED, your “Gen $” team is bigger than just your employees:
- Expert instructors who offer you cutting-edge information
- Experienced exhibitors who can solve your toughest problems
- Friendly colleagues who are willing to swap stories and tips

Learn how to blend the latest ideas, the newest equipment, and your ever-changing employees into the team that boosts your bottom line. That’s Gen $. That’s the NAFED Conference.

THE NAFED CONFERENCE MAKES IT EASY. REGISTER NOW.

LAS VEGAS, NV
March 7–8, 2019
Bally’s/Paris Hotel
3645 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89109
Conference Meeting Space: Bally’s Hotel
Hotel accommodation: Paris Hotel
NAFED Discounted Hotel Rate: $114
Reservation Cut-off Date: February 3, 2019
Reserve by phone at (877) 603-4389 with code: SPNAF9

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ
April 11–12, 2019
Caesars Atlantic City
2100 Pacific Avenue
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
NAFED Discounted Hotel Rate: $134
Reservation Cut-off Date: March 10, 2019
Reserve by phone at (888) 516-2215 with code: SCO4NF9

NEW ORLEANS, LA
May 9–10, 2019
Hilton Hotel New Orleans Riverside
Two Paydrias Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
Hotel Rate: $199
Reservation Cut-off Date: April 15, 2019
Reserve by phone at (504) 584-3999 with code: NFD

WWW.NAFED.ORG
Globe, as the leader in providing fusible links to the fire equipment industry, receives an abundance of calls from fire equipment dealers (FEDs), fire officials, and others in the industry continuously asking whether fusible links replaced, per code, during maintenance on a fire suppression system must bear the current-year date stamp.

A look at the NFPA 17A standard addresses this issue in the following manner. NFPA 17A, *Standard for Wet Chemical Extinguishing Systems*, 2017 edition, states the following requirements:

7.3.4* Fixed temperature sensing elements of the fusible metal alloy–type or glass bulb–type shall be replaced at least semiannually from the date of installation or more frequently, if necessary, and shall be destroyed when removed.

7.3.4.2 The year of manufacture and the date of installation of the fixed temperature sensing element shall be marked on the system inspection tag, and the tag shall be signed or initialed by the installer.

Note that section 7.3.4 has an asterisk. This directs you to the Annex of the standard for more detail. That information is as follows:

A.7.3.4 The date of manufacture marked on fusible metal alloy temperature sensing elements does not limit when they can be used. The intent of 7.3.4 is to require replacement of fusible metal alloy temperature sensing elements that have been installed for up to 6 months in environments subjecting them to contaminant loading, such as grease in restaurant hoods and ducts, that could adversely affect their proper operation.

There is nothing in the requirements above mandating the use of current-year dated fusible links when maintenance is performed. In fact, the Annex note clearly states the date on the fusible link does not limit when they can be used. Section 7.3.4.2 supports the use of older-dated fusible links by mandating the year of manufacture and the date of installation be recorded on the inspection tag of the system.

Many AHJs have a preference for current-year stamped fusible links. My advice is to do what your AHJ is requesting regardless of what the code is telling you. Remember, the code is the minimum guideline and the AHJ is within his enforcement powers to require more than what the code is calling for. In the cases where the AHJ is NOT requiring fusible links with the current year, it IS acceptable to use older-dated fusible links that are properly stored and cared for.

There are, however, several concerns that need to be raised.

1) Older fusible links cannot be sitting in your service truck for months at a time where ambient temperatures fluctuate and can reach extreme hot or cold conditions.
2) Fusible links must be stored in a cool, dry place.
3) Recycling of previously used fusible links is forbidden. Once a fusible link is installed within the fire suppression system it begins to degrade. The code stated above mandates used fusible links be destroyed after use.
Not adhering to these simple guidelines may result in unwanted discharges or no discharge at all. Also keep in mind that fusible links older than one year are out of warranty. Should an unwanted discharge or problem arise, you will not be able to turn to the manufacturer for support.

Globe Technologies requires the use of fresh inventory and always recommends the use of links within the current date code to prevent any potential conflicts with the local AHJs and insurance underwriters. This practice will provide you and your customer with a product under warranty and will help to prevent unwanted discharges or systems not performing as they are intended.

Please watch our YouTube video on this subject: https://youtu.be/UlKhXyou_Lpk or visit our web site at www.globetechnologies.com.

Michael J. Laderoute is the president of Globe Technologies Corporation. He has fifty years in the fire protection industry working in all facets of manufacturing and sales. He is a past committee member on NFPA 1, 17, 17A, 96, 5000, 10, 101, and 505 technical committees. He served nine years as code consultant to the Fire Equipment Manufacturers’ Association (FEMA). He is a past member of the ICC Portable Fire Extinguisher and Pre-Engineered Systems Certification Exam Committee. He also served as a member of Underwriters Laboratories STP 605 for Portable Extinguishers and STP 300 for Pre-engineered Systems and STP 407 on Standpipes.
NAFED Accepting Nominations for Board of Directors Seat

NAFED is now accepting nominations for a seat opening on the board of directors and plans to hold an election in the first quarter of 2019. Nominations for supplier director will be accepted.

Open seats include:
Supplier Director

Contact: Please address all nominations (or questions) to Danny Harris at NAFED headquarters: tel (312) 461-9600, fax (312) 461-0777, e-mail dharris@nafed.org.

Who May Nominate: Only self-nominations will be accepted.

Information to Include With Nomination:
Name of nominee (your name)
Name of company
Contact information (address, telephone, fax, e-mail address)
Motivation for nomination
Background statement (bio/CV, relevant achievements)
Current affiliations, additional contact info
NAFED vision statement

Term of Office: The term of office is two years, beginning May 15, 2019. An elected supplier director may serve only one term and may not seek reelection to the board for a period of two years after the conclusion of his/her single two-year elected term.

Responsibilities:
• The supplier director shall be a representative of a supplier member company and actively be employed by that member company.
• The supplier director shall serve on the board of directors for a single period of two years or until its successor has been elected and qualified.
• The supplier director will be elected by a majority of the votes cast by the supplier members entitled to vote.
• The elected supplier director may serve only one term and may not seek reelection to the board for a period of two years after the conclusion of his/her single two-year elected term.
• Representatives of the same supplier member shall not serve on successive terms as supplier director.
After rigorous research and design, Coltraco has released a more accurate, reliable, and flexible ultrasonic flow meter.

1) Accurate - the Portasonic 2.FL0 is accurate to +/-1% accuracy
2) Reliable - the Portasonic 2.FL0 is calibrated to ISO17025 standards
3) Flexible - the Portasonic 2.FL0 has three modes of operation, making it suitable to different environments

The Portasonic 2.FL0 ultrasonic flow meter is used to measure flow rates of clean liquid in pipe. The device comes with clamp-on transducers for non-invasive measurement. The Portasonic 2.FL0 utilizes two transducers, one that acts as ultrasonic transmitters and the other as receivers. There are three principles of operation: V-method, W-method, or Z-method which refers to transducer positioning. The software calculates the time it takes for the ultrasonic pulse to pass from the transmitter to the receiver, which is dependent on the flow rate.

With no moving parts and an easy digital set-up, it’s a cost-effective and time-effective maintenance solution. Reduction of maintenance time and cost is a driving factor within any business operation with pipework installed. Accurate flow data provides the chance to make energy-saving measures by fine tuning the systems.

Portasonic 2.FL0 can be used for spot checks, using an internal, rechargeable battery or for extended continuous operation as a 4-20mA flow transmitter with AC power input. The ease of use and accuracy of Portasonic 2.FL0 allows for improved business continuity and safer buildings and industrial facilities across a variety of industry verticals. With the ability to conduct spot checks at mandated intervals, full integrity of pipework can be ensured.

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Send Firewatch! your feedback.
Comments, article ideas, or news tips are all welcome.

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FEMA Donates Extinguisher Training System in New Jersey
At an event on Friday, November 2, the FEMA Government Relations Committee (GRC) donated a state-of-the-art fire extinguisher training system to the Bergen County Fire Prevention and Protection Association in New Jersey. Bergen County Executive James Tedesco joined Bryan Hennig, Bergen County Fire Marshal, and Rich Silvia, president of the Bergen County Fire Prevention and Protection Association, to accept the donation at the Bergen County Fire Academy.

The BullsEye Laser-Driven Fire Extinguisher Training System allows fire safety educators to provide safe training in any setting. The training system will be housed at the Bergen County Fire Academy and will be used by all seventy municipalities of the county.

FEMA has always believed that using a fire extinguisher properly can save lives and protect property. With this system, New Jersey fire safety educators in the largest county in New Jersey will be able to expand the reach of their fire prevention programs by providing fire extinguisher training virtually anywhere, indoors or out. FEMA gifted the system to the group because of their members’ leadership in promoting fire safety throughout their state.

New Jersey is one of only a handful of states which have amended the national model codes by inserting an amendment which significantly reduces the number of portable fire extinguishers required in most public buildings, thereby weakening fire safety requirements. The FEMA GRC has been actively advocating for the repeal of this exception since it was inserted in 2014. The FEMA GRC plans to continue working with the New Jersey Association of Fire Equipment Distributors (NJAFED) and local officials to file legislation and promote regulation change.

Fighting for Extinguishers on Military Bases
Due to the FEMA GRC’s advocacy, legislation passed by Congress this summer and signed by the President, will urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to require portable extinguishers throughout military bases across the world. The United States military had required extinguishers throughout bases up until the release of the newest United Facilities Criteria (UFC)—which is the building code for US military bases worldwide—in 2017.

The new UFC states that portable fire extinguishers are no longer required in military buildings that are also equipped with automatic sprinklers and a fire alarm system. FEMA learned of this tradeoff in early 2017 when both Moody Air Force Base and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base told distributors to remove thousands of extinguishers from the bases. This leaves barracks housing military personnel and the buildings they work in less protected against a fire than almost every other building in the United States.

FEMA immediately engaged with the Congressional delegations of the FEMA GRC member companies to secure report language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that urges the DoD to update the UFC to ensure it provides members of the Armed Forces, their families, and other DoD personnel with adequate fire protection standards. The FEMA GRC will continue to work with members of Congress and with the Department of Defense to push for the speedy adoption of this common sense language.
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How Important Is Code Compliance Around Here?

By Bruce Carter

I conducted a full-day Sell to Win! seminar a few months ago for an enthusiastic group of sales and service folks at a successful fire protection company in the state of Alabama. The company owner shared his training strategy. First, allow four weeks for the avalanche of information and selling strategies taught in the seminar to digest and sink in with his team. Then, after a month, his plan was to bring me back for four days of in-the-field ride-along training to help the reps successfully apply the selling techniques to their own customers in their own territory. His plan sounded like a solid one to me. Swish, my bags were packed, and I was Alabamy bound!

The Sell to Win! seminar, if you have never participated in it, is chock-full of great verbal selling nuggets that (judging from the steady flow of e-mail I get from enthusiastic seminar graduates) work like magic! Even technicians with little or no actual sales experience or background write me with their stories of sales victory.

One such sales nugget works like this: Let us say that the service technician, during the process of conducting the annual inspection of the client’s portable extinguishers, identifies an area where, according to NFPA 10, the customer needs additional portable extinguisher protection. The typical approach to this discovery might be to track down the decision-maker at the end of the inspection, inform him of the situation, explain the code-required need for the additional protection, and sell it. Without question, this simple and direct approach will achieve the desired result a percentage of the time.

A slightly different approach that works much more effectively, however, involves this subtle addition to the process. At the conclusion of the inspection, rather than telling the prospect what he needs to buy right off the bat, the service representative asks a simple yet purposeful question: “Mr. Johnson, I’ve just wrapped up the annual inspection of your portable fire extinguishers and have a quick question for you. How important is fire code compliance around here?” Nearly 100 percent of customers are going to respond with precisely the same answer. Very important!

Now, look at what this approach has accomplished. Mr. Johnson did not fully realize the reason for the service rep’s question but with his answer has taken a solid stand and a firm position that he cannot easily back out of. Now, when informed that it will be necessary to purchase some additional fire equipment in order to be code compliant, it is going to be nearly impossible for him to respond with any answer other than, “Go ahead and put it in.”

Upon reading this, a misinformed critic of this suggested approach may yell “Manipulation!” and I would be the first to agree with him! That is correct. I would agree that this approach is blatantly manipulative if it is used to sell fire equipment that is “application overkill.” To sell a twenty-pound extinguisher where a five-pound unit would suffice or to sell a clean agent where a dry chemical would be perfectly appropriate is, well, application overkill and not ethical. We are certainly not talking about abusing this approach in that manner.

To get more people involved in more of the correct amount, size, and type of fire equipment they legitimately need, this simple approach works very well. The next time the opportunity presents itself, give it a try. I believe you will find it most effective. Good selling!
The FED Learning Center is an industry-specific, educational platform for all members of the Fire and Life Safety community, providing code-based information and hands-on technical training from credible, industry experts.

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“If you have the right conversation you can really turn around people,” said Anna Gavin, president of Fireline Corporation in Baltimore, Maryland.

But, as many small business owners learn the hard way, engaging in the right conversation in the workplace can be elusive.

Depending on the size of your workforce, hundreds or thousands of conversations are taking place during your workday. Workplace conversations run the gamut, ranging from congenial greetings in the morning, to strategic and tactical conversations to move projects and initiatives forward, to decision making and problem solving, to venting frustrations and looking for validation, support, and empathy, and finally to sales and customer service conversations.

All of those conversations are natural and necessary in the course of human interaction required to function as a business and in a society. Yet, all of those conversations and the contexts in which they occur can be boiled down to just four types. You could even refine the concept by saying there are only two conversations: productive and unproductive.

The “right” conversation is a productive one, but engaging in the right conversation in the workplace is elusive for three reasons:

- The conscious avoidance of the right conversation even when you know what it should be.
- The fact that sometimes the right conversation is hard to identify because there can be many right conversations but not all right conversations are the best conversation for the moment.
- Sometimes the other person in the conversation hijacks the topic, pulling your right conversation in a direction you are unable to redirect.

Creating a company culture committed to having more right conversations will not only “turn people around” as Gavin said but can also turn companies around. The challenge is that there are actually four conversations that can occur in any work environment and only one of them is the right conversation. That means the other three are not, and you and your people have a 75 percent chance of engaging in the wrong conversation. Chances are there are many more wrong conversations taking place in your workplace.

The four conversations include:

- The wrong conversation with the wrong person.
- The wrong conversation with the right person.
- The right conversation with the wrong person.
- The right conversation with the right person.

Wrong Conversation with the Wrong Person

As you might imagine, these are more than ineffective conversations. These are time and productivity wasting

By Skip Weisman

December 2018 FIREWATCH! [25]
conversations.

What types of conversations are these? These are the gossip-mongering interactions between team members where there is a lot of complaining, venting, or lamenting with others who have no authority or responsibility capable of resolving any expressed issues. These conversations are where time, productivity, and morale die in organizations and need to be limited.

When exploring these conversations with team members in a client company, it is interesting to note how no one admits to liking these conversations. Yet, everyone admits to participating in them but not initiating them. I’m not sure that’s entirely possible.

These conversations persist for two primary reasons. The first is that when frustrated, human beings need to vent to release stress and tension. There is nothing wrong with that, and it should be encouraged so that team members can express their feelings. The challenge is that these conversations can be very validating and comforting to those participating. So, it’s easy to stay in them, wasting time and productivity, as well as emotional energy and focus.

The second reason is that people want to be empathetic and compassionate and don’t have the communication skills to help the initiator of the wrong conversation move on to something more productive. So both parties stay engaged in this wrong conversation for way too long.

**Right Conversation with the Wrong Person**

This is the second of the three wrong conversations.

Brian Patterson, vice-president of AAA Fire Protection in the Bay Area of California explained one type of these: “Often, because I get in early before most people when the technicians begin arriving, they have a tendency to speak with me since I’m an owner. But, typically, I have to redirect them to our service manager because for service situations I’m not the right person.”

When people have the right idea and need to speak with someone about something, they often direct it to the wrong person and it wastes time. Not all of these conversations are unproductive, and many are done with the best of intentions, but some are just a waste of time.

The difference is whether the conversation can be moved rapidly to the right person. If it can be and the person initiating the conversation takes advantage of it, it quickly becomes a path to a conversation with the right person.

If not, and the conversation remains with the wrong person, it turns into procrastination and falls down into the wrong conversation with the wrong person described in the section above.

**Wrong Conversation with the Right Person**

This may be the trickiest conversation to get right. It sounds simple and you’d be amazed at how often people get it wrong or allow the conversation to drift away from what it should be.

Because getting in front of the right person can be challenging due to coordinating schedules or having to navigate through others to make the connection, these often become missed opportunities.

Often, the initiator of the conversation starts off with the intention of having the right conversation, and one of two things will happen, either:

- The right person hijacks the conversation to make it about something else more important to them, and then the initiator is unable, for a variety of reasons, to get it back on track.
- The initiator realizes at some point during the conversation that their original concept for the right conversation was misaligned.

These conversations also can kill the initiator’s credibility with the right person while also killing their own self-confidence.

Often, after the conversation is
over, the initiator begins replaying the conversation in their mind realizing, “I should have said this” or “I wish I said that.” After the fact, it’s very difficult to revisit the conversation in a time period that makes sense to address what should have been the right conversation, making it a missed opportunity.

“A lot of the wrong conversations with the right person I’ve noticed in our work environment comes from people making assumptions, believing they know what someone is going to say or how they are going to respond in advance,” said Gavin. “Another is when people try to have conversations via e-mail instead of walking down the hall for a face-to-face interaction.”

I have to agree with Gavin, conversations via e-mail are always the wrong conversation. ("Conversation" in an e-mail context is defined as anything that goes beyond two e-mails back and forth each).

Right Conversation with the Right Person
This should be what everyone in your company should be committed to. These are the conversations that provide a path to:
• solutions,
• resolution,
• understanding,
• exerting positive influence,
• growth, and
• progress.

It is important to understand that the right conversation doesn’t necessarily need to end with a solution or resolution to anything. The most important thing that
makes a conversation “the right conversation” is that it includes three things:

1. There is a purpose to the conversation and both parties are clear as to what that purpose is.
2. It is on a topic of importance to one or more of the people involved.
3. The person to whom it was important feels heard and respected when the conversation is over.

Here are three steps to ensure you are moving towards the right conversation with the right person:

**Step 1:** Determine if the person you think is the right person has:
- The authority and/or responsibility you need for what you are asking for.
- The standing and/or credibility in the organization you need to help you get what you are asking for.
- The relationships you need to help you get what you’re asking for.

**Step 2:** Decide which of four possible right conversations it should be:
- About the relationship
- About an issue
- About performance (yours, theirs, the team’s, the organization’s)
- About the future (yours, theirs, the team’s, the organization’s)

**Step 3:** Deliver the right conversation to the right person by:
- Preparing appropriately and thoroughly.
- Practicing (role playing with someone for feedback and refinement).
- Presenting (to the right person, comfortably improvising in a respectful give-and-take).

Patterson suggests that the right conversation with the right person always includes, “dealing with issues as they arise; you can’t ignore things and think they’re going to go away. Not dealing with issues promptly creates a lot of different problems than if you just deal with things head on.”

Gavin needed to have a lot of difficult, right conversations to create a more positive and productive company culture after taking her company’s helm in 2009. As Gavin said, “When you have the right conversations in your work environment, it makes a difference in being able to keep people on track and to turn people around when they get off track.”

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**Honeywell Hard Hat Recall**

**Reason for Recall:**
Honeywell learned of a quality issue affecting certain lot numbers of Fibre Metal E2 Cap and North Peak A79 hard hats that may render them unable to provide the impact protection for which they were designed and certified.

**Risk to Health:**
Although Honeywell is not aware of any safety incidents involving the affected hard hats, in cooperation with Health Canada and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, they have initiated a voluntary product recall of the items involved. The hard hats included in the recall may not provide the level of protection for which they were designed and certified in the case of impact.

**Remedy:**
Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled hard hats and contact Honeywell to receive a product credit or voucher equal to the purchase price of the recalled hard hat.

**Consumer Contact:**
Honeywell toll-free at 888-212-6903 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday or online at www.honeywellsafety.com and click on Voluntary Product Recall for more information.

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Leadership Summit  
Austin, TX  
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www.esa-summit.com

March 7–8, 2019  
NAFED Sectional Conference  
Las Vegas, NV  
Bally’s/Paris Hotel  
See www.nafed.org

April 11–12, 2019  
NAFED Sectional Conference  
Atlantic City, NJ  
Caesars Atlantic City  
See www.nafed.org

May 9–10, 2019  
NAFED Annual Conference  
New Orleans, LA  
Hilton Hotel New Orleans Riverside  
See www.nafed.org

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