



# ORFED

Oregon Fire Equipment Distributors  
14324 SE Stark St.  
Portland, OR. 97233

January 11, 2010

John Caul, Chairman  
Oregon Fire Codes Committee  
Oregon Office of State Fire Marshall  
4760 Portland Road NE  
Salem, Or 97305-1760

Re: Certification Standards for Pre-engineered Special Hazard Fire Suppression Systems.

Dear Mr. Caul:

The Oregon Fire Equipment Distributors has been asked to make recommendations for certification of technicians who perform service on special hazard pre-engineered fire suppression systems. Included in the scope of these recommendations are those technicians who install and/or service Wet Chemical systems (per NFPA 17A) typically used to protect commercial cooking equipment, and/or Dry Chemical Systems (per NFPA 17) typically used to protect various types of paint spray booths, and other industrial hazards.

First, some background information about the current certification process in our industry as it relates to service and installation of these systems.

The manufacturers of pre-engineered fire systems currently provide training and certification for individual technicians, or for the companies they represent. Typically, such certification of training is required before the manufacturer will sell product to the distributor. In addition, the manufacturers typically will provide training and certification exclusively for the distributors who sell and install their product line. The manufacturers offer this training on an on-going basis, and require re-training, typically at no less than two-year intervals. Technicians who are certified by the manufactures have received product-specific hands-on training and training in the applicable NFPA standards (17, 17A, 96 and 33).

In addition to the product-specific training and certification provided by the manufacturers, there are a number of third-party practical hands-on training programs which are nationally recognized by our industry. These “generic” training programs typically train technicians on the proper service of all brands of systems. One such training program is FPC Ltd., and details of their training and certification programs can be viewed at <http://www.fpcltd.com/seminars.html>.

A third type of certification has been developed in recent years by our national trade organization (National Association of Fire Equipment Distributors) and is now administered by the International Code Council (I.C.C.). This certification involves rigorous testing of technicians on the code requirements of NFPA 17, 17A, 96, and 33.

We are recommending that Oregon recognize a blend of these three types of training and certification processes. In most jurisdictions in Oregon, installation of new fire systems requires building permits, plans review, and inspections. Some jurisdictions also require permits for modification of systems, although the level of modification requiring permits varies with locality. Nevertheless, this required permit process gives us a logical and definable distinction between *Installation* and *Service*.

Thus, we recommend the implementation of a two-tiered certification process in Oregon, as follows:

- 1) Only *manufacturer's certification* should be recognized and accepted for all permitted work (including **installation** and **modifications** requiring permits). Manufacturer's certificates should accompany all plans submittals for such work. As the Manufacturer's Certificate encompasses hands-on training and codes requirement training, this is the only certification necessary for installation and modification of these systems.
- 2) This same *manufacturer's certification* should be recognized and accepted for **maintenance** and **service** of the manufacturer's systems only.
- 3) For the **maintenance** and **service** of systems other than those for which the servicing company and/or the technician holds a manufacturer's certificate, the following combination of certifications should be recognized and approved:
  - a) A certificate of training from a *recognized third party hands-on training* (such as FPC Ltd., NAFED, etc.), and
  - b) A certificate from an *ICC style test* on the applicable codes (NFPA 96, 33, 17 and 17A),

In all cases, service technicians must also have the manufacturers' service manuals and tools for each brand of system serviced.

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Certification should be valid for no more than 3 years, with requirements for continuing education credits similar to those now in place for portable fire extinguisher service technicians.

While it might seem simpler to recognize only manufacturer's certificates, there are a number of reasons for our recommendation that the State recognize third-party certificates for service and maintenance. Among them are,

- 1) Greater access to the market will result from this less-restrictive approach, and the enhanced trade will in turn benefit the consumers of our services.
- 2) Many rural areas of Oregon are served by one or two fire equipment distributors, and there are many systems in place for which manufacturer's distributors are not readily available.
- 3) Many restaurants and institutions who use our services have systems in place which are of multiple brands. These end-users typically prefer to do business with a single service provider, and it might be unduly cumbersome to require them to do otherwise.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about these recommendations. And let us know if you would like a representative from ORFED at the committee meeting in which you plan to take up this question.

Respectfully,

Cliff Martin  
Secretary