

A New Learning Tool

by Dean K. Wilson, P.E.

***Question:* We operate a fire alarm system installation, testing, and maintenance business. Lately, more and more new customers seem to expect us to have a broader knowledge of fire protection. Can you recommend some resource that would help us learn how fire alarm systems relate to the other parts of an overall fire protection system for a protected property?**

Answer: In order to understand how a fire alarm system relates to the other fire protection systems for a property, one should learn about “holistic fire protection.” Holistic means “emphasizing the organic or functional relationship between parts and wholes.” The concept of holism states that the whole represents far more than the simple sum of the interacting elementary parts. The holistic approach, applied to the field of fire protection, recognizes that no one can effectively analyze the protection for a building and its occupants by looking only at the individual fire protection components or systems. Rather, one must examine how all of the individual components or systems interact with and support each other.

If you had asked your question before March of 2006, I would not have had any resource I could have comfortably recommended that would have fully met your needs. Fortunately, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has just published a new book entitled *Facility Manager's Fire Protection Guide*. This book has my highest possible recommendation. Here's why.

First of all, the authors of this book—Larry Davis and Jeffrey Moore—both have extremely deep and varied careers in fire protection. They bring to this book a combined total of nearly 60 years of experience in recommending protection for some of the largest industrial facilities in the world. In addition, they each have a wide range of extremely practical experience in applying the principles and practices of fire protection engineering to facilities that include the simplest occupancy to the most complex facility.

Larry Davis works as a private fire protection and training consultant. He has had extensive experience in the fire service. He served as a fire fighter in the U.S. Air Force. He spent 27 years working for Industrial Risk Insurers. During his tenure at IRI, Larry worked 10 years as a field engineer and then spent 17 years teaching at IRI's world-renowned Loss Prevention Training Center and Fire Safety Laboratory. He served 5 years as a staff division chief for the Refinery Terminal Fire Company and Industrial Emergency Services, LLC. He has served over 20 years as a volunteer fire fighter and invested over 30 years as a fire service instructor at several colleges. Larry has served on a number of NFPA Technical Committees, written 7 books, and written many magazine articles. He currently writes the monthly "Rural Fire Command" column for *FireRescue Magazine*. Larry holds certification from the Board of Certified Fire Protection Specialists. He also has earned certification as a Fire Service Instructor II. Larry holds membership in the Society of Fire Protection Engineers and served as former chairman of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors.

Jeffrey Moore currently works as a senior engineer with the fire protection engineering consulting firm, Hughes Associates, Inc. He holds licensure as a Professional Engineer in fire protection engineering in both Ohio and Alabama. Jeff holds certification from the Board of Certified Fire Protection Specialists. He also has earned certification as a Fire Service Instructor II.

Jeff currently serves as the chair of the NFPA Technical Committee on Protected Premises Fire Alarm Systems. Jeff worked for a total of 16 years for Industrial Risk Insurers. He served as a field engineer and district supervising engineer. He also taught for 10 years at the IRI Loss Prevention Training Center and Fire Safety Laboratory. He worked for 5 years as the fire protection engineer for Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Jeff has served as a fire fighter for over 20 years. He has written numerous magazine articles and, with Larry Davis, coauthored a previous book entitled *Industrial Fire Control Concepts*. Jeff has taught extensively for NFPA, for the OSHA Training Institute, and for the Air Force Institute of Technology.

Now for the second reason I so highly recommend this new book. These two authors bring their wealth of experience to bear in presenting the concepts of fire protection in a very readable and extremely understandable manner. In 14 chapters ranging over 546 pages, a reader can develop an excellent understanding of how to apply the holistic fire protection to virtually every occupancy. Using time-tested principles, the authors guide the reader through the analysis necessary to make sound decisions regarding the application of fire protection methods and systems.

The 14 chapter titles include: *The Fire Threat, The Science of Fire, Life Safety and OSHA Regulations, Fire Control Concepts, Common Hazards, Fire Detection and Alarm Systems, Fire Extinguishing Agents, Manual Fire Suppression, Automatic Sprinkler Systems, Fire Protection Water Supplies, Fire Pumps, Special Extinguishing Systems, Preemergency Planning, and Management Fire Safety Programs*. The book also contains an extensive bibliography that documents the factual resources for its content.

As I wrote at the beginning of this article, I give this book my highest possible recommendation. Here's my third reason for such glowing support. Literally anyone who works in any aspect of fire protection will benefit from this book. It offers a very comprehensive, yet

extremely logical, approach. The authors have jammed the book full of helpful information. The margins of many pages in the book contain “Quick Tips” that highlight key information. NFPA has done a most excellent job in the design and publication process for this book. From a very durable cover, to a graphically rich content, this book will easily become a well-used reference tool, once the reader has read through it in its entirety.

With a list price of \$90.00 and an NFPA member price of \$81.00, this book represents a significant investment for the purchaser. However, such an investment is money well spent. This book actually contains material worth far more than the purchase price. Every reader will be glad he or she has such a wealth of material available in a single volume.

IMSA member Dean K. Wilson, P.E., FSFPE, C.F.P.S., now retired on disability, formerly worked as a Senior Engineer in the Erie (PA.) office of the fire protection engineering and code consulting firm, Hughes Associates, Inc. (www.haifire.com). The opinions expressed in this article are strictly his own. You can reach him by e-mail at deanwilson@adelphia.net or by telephone at 814-897-0827.