

## **Help Available Now**

by Dean K. Wilson, P.E.

***Question:* We have installed fire alarm systems for years. In the last year, we have more often than not received a request for a quotation where our client wants us to monitor the integrity of the sprinkler system installed at the facility. Where can we learn what we need to know about sprinkler systems? We need help.**

*Answer:* You can find general information concerning automatic sprinkler systems, and specific information about the relationship between fire alarm systems and automatic sprinkler systems, by pointing your web browser to [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). Once you reach the website of the National Fire Protection Association, click on the tab at the top of the screen labeled “Learning.”

From the drop down menu, choose “Training and Professional Development.” From the drop down submenu, choose “Seminars.” This will take you to the seminar page. On that page, choose “Select a seminar.” This will take you to the “Seminar Search” page.

Here you can either input dates and search for a seminar, or use your scroll bars to navigate downward to a list of the various seminars available. For the maximum information regarding automatic sprinkler systems, you will find that the 5-day seminar offers you the best bet.

“But, I’m a fire alarm installer,” you may counter.

I realize that. Nevertheless, the more you know about automatic sprinkler systems, the better you will serve your customers who ask you to interface with sprinkler systems.

You may also choose one of the NFPA Fire Alarm Seminars. These seminars include information on interfacing with automatic sprinkler systems and other fire protection systems. However, they do not include as much detailed information about the automatic sprinkler systems as do the sprinkler seminars.

The real key to all of the NFPA seminars derives from the list of highly qualified, and very respected, seminar instructors. For many years, I have had the privilege of working with many of these instructors. Each one brings a unique and thorough background to the classroom. Each one can answer questions you may bring to the seminar and point you in the right direction.

You may also wish to explore NFPA's on-line learning courses. To do so, at the NFPA homepage, just click on "Learning." From the drop down menu, choose "Training and Professional Development." From the drop down submenu, choose "Online Learning." This will take you to NFPA's online learning partner, NextKnowledge. You will find a host of courses on a variety of subjects, including automatic sprinkler systems and fire alarm systems. While I do not know whether or not NFPA has had these courses updated to the latest versions of the respective codes and standards, they contain a very cost effective way of gaining an overview of each subject.

When you need help, learning always offers a wise pathway to success. Because the National Fire Protection Association develops the codes and standards that regulate the fire protection industry, you make a very wise choice when you select NFPA as your source for learning opportunities.

But, don't forget the very excellent courses and materials offered by IMSA. In the other pages of this magazine, you will find information that can assist you in your professional development. You can also check out the various learning opportunities that IMSA provides by pointing your web browser to [www.imsasafety.org](http://www.imsasafety.org). Click on "Products & Services" on the left side

menu. Then look at the listing of available manuals. The “Interior Fire Alarm” series offers solid information.

Coupled with the code-related information provided by NFPA, you just can’t go wrong with the resources provided by IMSA. So hop on the “learning bandwagon” and start your ride down the pathway that leads to success.

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