

Another New Code!

by Dean K. Wilson, P.E.

Question: We install fire alarm systems in a tri-state area. This means that we work with lots of Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs). Over the last ten years, we have developed a company culture where we pride ourselves in keeping up-to-date with the latest changes to the codes and standards. Isn't it about time for the National Fire Protection Association to release a new edition of NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*?

You're right! The various Technical Committees of the NFPA Signaling Project—under the oversight of the Technical Correlating Committee on Signaling Systems for the Protection of Life and Property—have labored intensely over the past 18 months. As a result of processing Public Proposals and Public Comments, and as a result of detailed deliberations, those Technical Committees presented NFPA 72-2010, *National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code*, to the membership on Thursday, June 11, 2009 in Chicago, IL.

While the membership considered and voted on a few floor motions, the new document received an affirmative vote. In addition, some individuals have already submitted Tentative Interim Amendments (TIAs). Processing has begun on these TIAs. It remains likely that these TIAs will reach the Standards Council of NFPA in time for consideration at their mid-August meeting. If the Standards Council votes to issue one or more of those TIAs, the text of the new *Code* will incorporate any word changes prior to publication. This will give a much “cleaner” document.

While the detailed NFPA codes and standards procedure moves forward, under the jurisdiction of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), other individuals have contributed commentary on the proposed *Code*. NFPA will publish this commentary in a *National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code Handbook*. This *Handbook* should become available very soon after the publication of NFPA 72-2010, *National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code*—sometime in late September or early October.

The first thing you will notice about the new *Code*: the name has changed. In order to broaden the application of the document, especially in light of the burgeoning interest in Mass Notification Systems and the use of fire alarm system technology to monitor a rising number of supervisory signal initiating devices. Within the *Code*, you will find that in as many places as possible, the Technical Correlating Committee on Signaling Systems for the Protection of Life and Property has directed the Technical Committees to replace the word “fire” with more generic language.

The next thing you will notice about NFPA 72-2010: the document has many, many more chapters than the 11 chapters of the previous editions. The Technical Correlating Committee has done a great deal of reorganizing of the document. They have also reserved a number of chapters for future developments in the signaling industry. As a result, the new *Code* will have a total of 29 chapters and 8 Annexes. As this article goes to press, the following two paragraphs contain the current list of chapters and Annexes.

Chapter 1 contains requirements relating to Administration. Chapter 2 lists the Referenced Publications. Chapter 3 contains the Definitions. Chapter 10 contains the requirements for Fundamentals. Chapter 12 contains the requirements for Circuits and Pathways. Chapter 14 contains the requirements for Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance. Chapter 17 contains the

requirements for Initiating Devices. Chapter 18 contains the requirements for Notification Appliances. Chapter 21 contains the requirements for Emergency Control Functions and Interfaces. Chapter 23 contains the requirements for Protected Premises Fire Alarm Systems. Chapter 24 contains the requirements for Emergency Communications Systems (ECS). Chapter 26 contains the requirements for Supervising Station Fire Alarm Systems. Chapter 27 contains the requirements for Public Emergency Alarm Reporting Systems. Chapter 29 contains the requirements for Single- and Multiple-Station Alarms and Household Fire Alarm Systems. The Correlating Committee has reserved Chapters 4 through 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 25, and 28 for future development.

Annex A contains explanatory material for the chapters within the main body of the Code. Annex B contains the Engineering Guide for Automatic Fire Detector Spacing. Annex C contains the System Performance and Design Guide. Annex D contains material regarding Speech Intelligibility. Annex E contains NEMA SB 30, *Fire Service Annunciator and Interface* (included with permission from the National Electrical Manufacturers Association). Annex F contains a Sample Ordinance Adopting NFPA 72. Annex G contains Informational References. Annex H contains a Cross-Reference Table.

As you prepare to familiarize yourself with the new document, you will have lots of changes to wade through. In some cases, the changes will seem largely organizational, even cosmetic. In other cases, you will find significant changes that may impact on the fire alarm systems you design for your customers or approve for your jurisdiction.

In any case, you do well to make certain that you stay up-to-date with the development of the codes and standards that affect the level of fire protection in the geographic areas you serve.

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