

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:



Charlene Kidder

Study to Gain Approval

In early August of 2009, the Standards Council of the National Fire Protection Association met to process the documents adopted by the NFPA membership at the *NFPA Conference & Expo* in June. These documents include NFPA 72-2010, *National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code*. I know it only seems like yesterday that you received a copy of NFPA 72-2007, but “Time flies when you’re having fun!”

By the end of September, copies of the new *Code* became available. Jurisdictions began adopting it. Fire alarm system specifiers, designers, manufacturers, installers, maintainers, and Authorities Having Jurisdiction all began to rush to learn about the contents of the new *Code*.

I want to offer some very practical suggestions on how you can bring yourself and your organization up to date and learn about the requirements contained in new *Code*.

First of all, make certain that you do not put off learning about the new edition of the *Code*. Take out your calendar and set aside some time right now

to follow my suggestions. Do not procrastinate. Do not expect that you will simply learn about the new *Code* when issues come up on your projects. The poorest way to learn anything occurs when an individual has to learn under the pressure of a project’s completion deadline. Rather, determine to “learn at your leisure.” Learning that takes place on purpose offers the best way to gain true knowledge and understanding.

Next, order your copy now. Order a copy of the *Code* **and** order a copy of the 2010 edition of the *National Fire Alarm Code Handbook*. You will want to have a copy of the *Code* available that you can carry with you from job to job. And, you will want to have the *Handbook* available so you will have access to the very helpful and insightful commentary provided by various authors.

These individuals have spent many hours analyzing the impact of those requirements on real world projects. The information they offer in their commentary can significantly improve your ability to understand the reasoning behind the requirements.

With your copy of the *Code* in hand, make arrangements with one or more colleagues to set up a study group. Just find a time when two or more of you can get together. Then, go line by line through the *Code*. I know that may seem like a daunting task. But, by going item by item through the *Code*, you will gain a much fuller understanding of how the individual requirements relate

to each other.

Significant research on adult learning suggests that studying in a group introduces a dynamic that multiplies the effectiveness of the learning process. You can discuss portions of the material that you do not fully understand. You can ask each other key questions. You can more fully explore the subtle nuances that certain requirements of the *Code* may present.

You will soon discover that every hour you spend learning about the requirements of the *Code* will increase your competency. Increasing your competency will also increase your effectiveness, help you complete tasks more quickly, and multiply your overall efficiency.

No matter what role you play in the fire alarm system process, comprehensively knowing and understanding the requirements of the *Code* will help the work you do gain approval. And, by “approval” I don’t simply mean acceptance by the owner of the facility or by the various Authorities Having Jurisdiction. Approval means much more.

Gaining approval of your own knowledge and understanding of the *Code*, your own ability to translate the requirements of the *Code* into a practical, cost-effective solution to meet the needs of a client, offers you significant rewards. That kind of approval has a positive impact on your personal reputation. It also has a positive impact on the reputation of your organization.

In these times of economic stress, anything you can do to improve your reputation will pay dividends in the way potential customers will value your service.

If you work as an Authority Having Jurisdiction, improving your reputation will make everyone you work with more willing to respond to your rulings and recommendations. It will make your working environment much more pleasant and less stressful.

So, study for approval. Get to know the new *Code*. Gain knowledge and increase your understanding. As for those of us at *TM-WSR*, we’ll try to help you as much as we can. □

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