

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:



Charlene Kidder

Say It! Then, Do It!

We live in a world where truth seems to have less and less value. Maybe it's just the current season of mid-term election politics, but am I the only one who thinks political commercials mirror our times where the truth seems hard to find?

One mark that sets the true professional apart from his or her peers is a determination to always tell the truth. In fact, a professional who relies on truth-telling as a way of life will garner much advantage in every way.

If truth-telling has great advantage, how do we apply that to the world of fire protection? How do we apply truth-telling to fire alarm systems?

We can begin by determining to always tell the truth throughout every phase of the process: fire alarm system design, approval, installation, testing, maintenance, and acceptance. Begin by recording the design in carefully written specifications. Don't leave anything to chance. Don't leave any room for misleading interpretation. Don't leave gaps that may later allow you to coerce an installer into providing something

that you did not really include in the specifications. In other words, by means of detail specifications, tell the truth about exactly what design requirements you expect the fire alarm system to meet. Avoid using statements in the specifications that will leave decision-making open ended.

Next, use absolute truth-telling as a guiding principle in creating the design drawings that will accompany the specifications. Make certain that the drawings leave no room for guessing on the part of contractors who will submit bids. Give everyone who will read the drawings as much information as possible. Avoid placing "catch-all" notes on the drawing that refer to compliance with the various codes and standards when you have not included a code- or standards-complying design on the drawing. To do so means you are depending on your cleverness rather than on the truth.

As an Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), as you review the specifications and design drawings for the purpose of granting preliminary approval, make certain that you adhere to the principle of truth-telling. Do not substitute your own opinions and prejudices for the hard and fast requirements of the appropriate codes and standards. Make certain that every criticism you transmit to the designer has a factual, truthful basis. Facts stated in a truthful way ensure the integrity of your review and, in fact, help build your own reputation

for fairness and accuracy. If you don't know something, say so. Whatever you do, don't pretend to have knowledge. When you lie about your own level of understanding, you will jeopardize the faithfulness and value of your review.

As a contractor preparing to bid on a fire alarm installation, base your decisions and your communications on the principle of truth-telling. Don't say one thing, and then intend to do something else. Make certain you have clearly understood the specifications and design drawings. Develop your bid based on the clarity of the design documents. If you don't have certain information that you need to make a proper bid, make certain that you promptly and insistently ask for that information. Avoid including catch phrases in your bid that will mislead the owner into thinking you will provide something that you have no intention of providing.

Once you begin your installation, adhere to all proper installation practices. Don't cut corners. Faithfully fulfill the true and proper intent of the design documents. And, when you conclude your work, truthfully represent what you've done by conducting testing in a codes- and standards-complying manner. Make certain you provide an accurate, written testing report.

As the AHJ, when you witness tests rely on truth-telling to provide a proper assessment of the work completed. Don't use the power of your office to force changes simply because you failed to diligently review the initial design. Rather, if you've missed something, truthfully report that to the owner and explain why the missing item is needed. And, make certain you provide a written acceptance report.

Once the contractor completes the system, the owner needs to execute a testing and maintenance contract to assure the long-term reliability and dependability of the fire alarm system. Again, rely on truth-telling as the guiding principle in this transaction.

Mark your life, especially your professional life, with the principle of truth-telling. Live and act consistently.

Say it! Then, do it! □

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