

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:

**Just talk to
me.
Please, just
talk to me.**



"You're not going to believe what they've done!"

I could clearly hear my caller's frustration in the tone of his voice. I could also identify with that frustration. I had felt it enough times in my days of field work, many years ago.

My caller had identified himself as one of the insurance company field engineers I had helped train. Currently he had arrived at the site of a new construction project he had been following over many months. Since his last visit five weeks ago, subcontractors had installed several of the protection systems. One installer had almost completed the rough installation of the fire alarm system wiring. And the subcontractor had not used the type of cable required by the fire alarm system specifications.

The subcontractor had pulled literally thousands of feet of cable. And it was wrong. Totally, completely, unconditionally, absolutely wrong!

First of all, the subcontractor had not followed the specifications. The specifications—developed in consultation between the architect/engineering

firm, building owner, insurance company, local building inspector, and local fire marshal—called for UL Listed cables. Type NPLF used for most connections. Type NPLFR used for vertical runs. And, Type NPLFP used above suspended ceilings in "other spaces used for environmental air."

Secondly, the subcontractor had not provided the proper number of conductors between the fire alarm system control panel and the eighteen sprinkler risers serving this new building. The specifications called for a Class B fire alarm initiating device circuit for the waterflow alarm initiating device for each riser. The specifications also called for a Class B supervisory initiating device circuit for each type of supervisory initiating device.

On wet pipe risers, meeting the requirements of the specifications would require at least a supervisory initiating device circuit for valve tamper supervisory initiating devices. On some wet pipe risers an additional supervisory initiating device circuit would serve low building temperature supervisory initiating devices.

On dry pipe risers, meeting the requirements of the specifications would require a supervisory initiating device circuit for valve tamper supervisory initiating devices. In addition, two more supervisory initiating device circuits would serve high and low air pressure supervision for the dry pipe valve and a low dry pipe valve closet temperature

supervisory initiating device.

Sadly, the subcontractor had pulled a single two-conductor cable to each riser. When questioned, the subcontractor quite angrily replied that he had "never ever installed a job with more than a single two-conductor cable. What a ridiculous waste of money. Everyone knows you connect the supervisory devices at the end of the circuit beyond the waterflow alarm switch. That's all you need to do."

When the insurance company engineer pointed out that the arrangement he described did not comply with the requirements of NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*, the subcontractor replied with a sneer, "Never read it." As a result of this subcontractor's failure to follow the specifications, and particularly because of his unrepentant attitude, he summarily lost his job. Later, a lawsuit filed against his company sought to recover the added expense his error cost the general contractor.

The subcontractor could have avoided every single bit of this hassle-ridden situation if only he had taken the time to talk to the insurance engineer. The general contractor had the engineer's pager number. All parties in the specifications-development meeting had reached an agreement that any deviations from the specifications would receive review and approval of all parties before the change would commence. The architect/engineering firm had specially made the general contractor aware of this agreement.

As an Authority Having Jurisdiction who desires to assist my insurance clients so they will always achieve their protection goals, I implore contractors and subcontractors to keep in touch with me. "When in doubt, give a shout!"

Communication forms the foundation of all successful job completion. Do my requirements seem harsh? Call me and I will explain. Do you think I've misunderstood a requirement in the *Code*? Call me and together we will find a common ground. Do you think I've missed some critical bit of information? Call me and share your knowledge.

Please, just talk to me. □

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