

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:



How Do They Dare Do It?

As she stood above me shaking with rage, the normally-calm account consultant shook the sheet of paper in my face.

"How do they dare to do this?" she shouted. "How do they dare?"

"Calm down," I retorted, pushing one of my visitor chairs in her direction. "Who are 'they' and what are they daring to do?"

She sat down with a sigh and began to bring herself back into her normal state of calm professionalism. Then she began to tell me the story.

For the better part of two years, she had painstakingly worked with one of her property insurance accounts while they planned, specified, designed, contracted, built, and occupied their state-of-the-art distribution center in Minnesota. She had had the far too rare privilege of consulting with her account about the many details of the fire protection philosophy and systems that would give their new facility excellent ability to minimize loss.

In the matter of fire protection surveillance, she had worked with them to

devise a combination of guard patrol tours through all idle areas and a central station fire alarm system covering manual fire alarm; waterflow from the automatic sprinkler system; sprinkler control valve supervisory; high and low air pressure for the four dry pipe automatic sprinkler systems protecting unheated areas of the facility; low building temperature in the areas protected by wet pipe automatic sprinkler systems; supervision of the diesel engine-driven fire pump; and supervision of the fire pump suction tank level and temperature.

The management of the facility had incorporated every one of her recommendations into the design specifications for the facility. Among these recommendations was one that specified the central station fire alarm system would meet all the requirements of the *National Fire Alarm Code*, including the requirement for the issuance of a UL certificate or FMRC placard. In fact, when she expressed her insurance company's preference for the UL certificate, the management of the facility readily agreed and made her recommendation part of the design specifications.

Imagine her chagrin when the field representative witnessing the test of the fire alarm system reported that the central station operating company providing the service had not applied to UL for the issuing of a UL certificate. Not only had they not applied to UL, they were now virtually refusing to do so.

After consultation with the management of her account, all parties agreed to hold the central station to the design specifications, and force them to provide the certificate. Which brings her story to the present.

The piece of paper she holds in her hand is a letter from the central station operating company claiming that the UL certificate must be treated as an extra, and will cost her account an additional \$8,000. She reminded me that the UL certificate simply provides assurance with potential third-party verification that the fire alarm system had been installed to meet the requirements of the *National Fire Alarm Code*, and the appropriate UL Standards.

"If the central station installed the system properly," she reasoned, "why are they insisting on this outrageous extra expense. The certificate itself only costs a nominal amount. How dare they!"

I explained that with very very few exceptions the companies providing central station service do not appear to actively support the UL fire alarm certificate program. That in case after case, as a property insurance Authority Having Jurisdiction, we feel that we practically have to "hold a gun to their head" to get them to issue the certificate.

Yes, at industry trade association meetings they often wine and dine UL representatives. They politic with fire chiefs and police chiefs talking about the frightening false alarm statistics. While all the time they ignore one of the best tools for reducing false alarms: the UL fire alarm certificate.

When a public Authority Having Jurisdiction succeeds in getting an ordinance on the books requiring the UL certificate, one of the first supporters of a store chain that seeks to bypass the ordinance is a representative from the central station providing service.

Even though the UL certificate sets a central station operating company apart from other lesser service providers and is really a mark of professionalism and quality assurance, the central station industry still seems to actively resist the issuance of this valuable document.

How dare they, indeed! □

The Moore-Wilson
SIGNALING
REPORT

September/October 1994

Page 12

Copyright © 1994 by Focus Publishing Enterprises