

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:



Charles Kober

Keeping Up— A Challenge and An Opportunity

“Measure Twice. Cut Once.” The sign hung on the wall of the cabinet maker’s shop. Good advice. Every person who has ever taken saw to wood can probably testify to a time when failing to follow this wise saying has caused at least momentary frustration.

Years ago, I purchased an entertainment center at a local Service Merchandise store. In the catalog, the entertainment center presented an attractive image. Looking at it, I could just imagine exactly where each of my audio components would fit on the shelves. The opening for the television offered just the right amount of space for my new color set.

When the box emerged from the conveyor opening that brought items from the warehouse to the receiving station, I gulped in surprise. Why the box housing my new entertainment center was long and relatively flat. How could this possibly be my beautiful new piece of furniture.

Then, I spotted those words that still to this day turn my heart cold: “Some assembly required.”

I hauled the box out to the car. Wedged it into the passenger’s side of the vehicle. It rested on the back deck and extended forward until it reached the dashboard. As I drove home, balancing the sideways movement of the box with my shoulder, I wondered what horrible experience lay before me.

I unpacked the box. Carefully reviewed the plans. Checked to make certain that I had all the parts called for in the instruction booklet. Then, I began the task of putting the entertainment center together.

Eight hours later, drenched in sweat, shaking with hunger and thirst, I finally got to the last of the numbered instructions. But wait a minute. I can’t find predrilled hole the instruction illustrates. Then, the shock of realization hit me. The very first board I had attached, the very first one, I had mounted upside down.

Needless to say, I did eventually resort to the only remedy available: I got out my power drill and added a new “post-drilled” hole. The entertainment center still sits in my living room. It has always had its glass doors mounted a little out of plumb. Every time I sit and look at it, I remember the eight grueling hours of torture it took to put it together.

If only I had carefully followed the directions. “Measure Twice. Cut Once.”

Installing fire alarm systems in a workmanlike manner requires every bit as much attention to detail. The installer has to follow several sets of instructions.

Of course, he or she must become familiar with the instruction manual supplied by the manufacturer of each piece of fire alarm system equipment.

But more than that, the over-arching instructions for fire alarm system installation come from NFPA 72-1999, *National Fire Alarm Code*. In addition, as far as the wiring that interconnects the system components, an installer must also follow the requirements of NFPA 70-2002, *National Electrical Code*.

I thought of this recently as I was helping to develop the new National Fire Protection Association Electrical Seminar series. Another three years have passed. The diligent work of the Code Making Panels who make up the Technical Committee on the *National Electrical Code* have processed the many thousands of public proposals and public comments. The membership of NFPA has acted on the document. The NFPA Standards Council has reviewed the record of the work. And, the 2002 edition of NFPA 70 is on its way back from the printer.

An installer of fire alarm equipment not only must read and understand the manufacturer’s instructions, he or she must read, understand, and keep up-to-date on the requirements of the codes and standards that provide the requirements for installing a fire alarm system.

At this very moment, the eight Technical Committees that write the various chapters of the *National Fire Alarm Code*, continue to press on toward completion of a revised version of that document. In May 2002, the membership of NFPA will have the opportunity to consider the report on NFPA 72-2002. By this time next summer, a new version of the *Code* will be on its way back from the printer.

In the world of fire protection, “Measure Twice. Cut Once.” requires designers of fire alarm systems, installers of fire alarm systems, and Authorities Having Jurisdiction who must review and approve fire alarm systems to make a diligent effort to keep up with changes in the *Code*. This offers a very real challenge. One that I hope you are ready and willing to accept. □

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