

FIRE SYSTEMS INSTALLATION

ICC action: Pro-sprinkler advocates triumphant

NFPA, AFAA lend their support in massive turnout

By Martha Entwistle

BALTIMORE—It was a sprinkler showdown in Baltimore at the October International Code Council meeting, but sprinkler-mandate foes faced an inferno with little more than a squirt gun. In fact, there were so many sprinkler proponents in the hearing room at one point, the local fire department said they were creating a fire hazard by exceeding the occupancy limit.

"The room was packed," said Jeff Hugo, manager of codes for the National Fire Sprinkler



Jeff Hugo

Association. "The fire marshal ordered the room evacuated so the seating could be rearranged to accommodate the number of people in room."

Hugo estimated that the legion of sprinkler supporters was 3,000 strong in that room. When the committee asked for a show of hands of those who wanted to get rid of the sprinkler mandate, Hugo said he "saw four people raise their hands, but I was in the front of the room, some other people said they saw 20."

The ICC voted to retain a mandate for the installation of sprinklers in new one- and two-family homes in the new International Residential Code (IRC).

The sprinkler mandate was first approved last fall at ICC hearing

in Minnesota. It was challenged at an ICC meeting in Minnesota in January. The final hurdle takes place at the end of October in 2010 in Charlotte, N.C., at "final action hearings" where the membership will give a final thumbs up or down to the code. Given the vote here, and considering some rules changes that will make it more difficult for sprinkler foes to pack the house with their supporters, Hugo thinks the sprinkler mandate will be staying in the code.

The sprinkler advocates had significant support from the NFPA and the Automatic Fire Alarm Association. Tom Hammerberg, president and executive director of the AFAA said he's working with

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Monitor Controls turns 40

By Martha Entwistle

WALLINGFORD, Conn.—With the slowdown in construction, Connecticut fire marshals have more time to inspect existing



John Yusza, Jr., John III, and Debbie Yusza-Sokol

systems and that's leading to more work for at least one fire installer.

Monitor Controls, based here, has had a good year, and one of the contributing factors to their "very stable business with predictable growth," according to John Yusza, Jr., president of the company, has been local AHJs cracking down. They're catching more problems that need to be fixed, and building owners have turned to Monitor Controls for assistance.

The company, which celebrates

40 years in business on Dec. 1, is family-owned and has 38 employees. It does commercial and residential security (the current mix is 55 commercial/45 residential), its own monitoring, fire, access control and video. Roughly 70 percent of the commercial work is fire. It's been a Fire-Lite and Bosch dealer for many years.

"We violate every rule of sales. Our trucks are not rolling billboards, we do no telemarketing, no direct marketing, and we have no sales staff," Yusza said. He and

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In Calif: job training online

Fire/Life Safety apprenticeship program expected to expand

By Martha Entwistle

SAN FRANCISCO—The California Fire/Life Safety Apprenticeship program went live this fall, after receiving approval by the state to offer courses online.

"It's been our goal from day one," said George Gunning, CEO of USA Alarm System, and one of the founders of the security apprenticeship program. The three-year program provides both book-based and hands-on training and a career path for life

safety technicians. The Electronic Security Association is in the process of taking the program nationwide. Getting the course online, said Gunning, "is not only important to California, it's important to the whole country."

Shane Clary of Bay Alarm Company spearheaded the lengthy approval process for the online courses. "It took longer [three years] than it took me to write my dissertation," he said.

Having the class online is

particularly important for students who live outside of metropolitan areas who may have to travel for more than four hours to get to classes.

"They still have to do all their coursework, assignments, and

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Shane Clary

TFP: Biz not bad in Lone Star State

Carpetbagging installers come to Texas

By Martha Entwistle

CARROLLTON, Texas—If business is not exactly booming here, it's busy enough that installers from other states have set up shop here in recent months, said Doug Berry, co-owner of Texas Fire Protection.

"A lot of out-of-town contractors have set up satellite offices down here. They're still based elsewhere,

but they come here, not just fire installers, but electrical and general contractors as well," Berry said.

Texas Fire Protection is a 10-employee shop that's been in business since 2002. They specialize in the high-end fire market, doing data centers, hospitals and high-rise buildings.

A Silent Knight and Gamewell-FCI distributor, Berry gets most of his work through referral: "We don't advertise and we try to stay off the large-bid market. We try to do invitation-only bids." That way, "you know you're a serious contender." It's a matter of time and building relationships to get to that stage, he said.

Berry said he has lately done some voice evacuation jobs, and a lot of "smoke control in larger projects... projects that are architecture-driven, if they have a large atrium in the entryway," Berry said. Those projects need "higher end fire systems because they require complicated programming and interface to do those types of operations."

Looking forward to 2010, Berry sees the economy picking up further. "Government work is pretty prevalent... and not just stimulus money for schools," he said. **SSN**



Doug Berry

BRIEFS

ASAA celebrates milestone

FORT SMITH, Ark.—Jordan Brown, an instructor for the Arkansas Security Alarm Association, which is a member of the National Electronic Security Alliance, told *Security Systems News* in an email that the organization celebrated the certification of its 1,000th student in October.

The Arkansas Security Alarm Association has provided training in Arkansas since January 2006. The training program was accepted in 2005 by the Arkansas Board of Private Investigators and Private Security Agencies (our licensing authority) as a board-approved equivalent to the National Training School and the National Institute for the Certification in Engineering Technologies.

"Since January 2006, we have held 11 Level I courses per year and nine Electronics and Fire Installation and Wiring Codes courses per year. We recently began offering our courses online. Our courses are accepted in several other states as well," Brown said in an email.

Training is 'in demand'

NORTHFORD, Conn.—Demand for training is up, according to Fire-Lite Alarms instructional curriculum developer and senior technical trainer, Tom Rosa.

"Many are coming to learn more about addressable systems and move away from conventional technology. Others are looking for additional hands-on training with the panels and our new IP Communicator," Rosa said in a prepared statement.

Rosa refers to Fire-Lite by Honeywell's traditional series of fire alarm systems trainings, which are ongoing, free-of-charge throughout the United States.

Courses cover a wide range of technical information, including installation, programming and trouble-shooting with practical hands-on exercises using the latest fire alarm control and IP communication products from Fire-Lite Alarms.

This year, Fire-Lite's training schedule includes more than 60 courses taking place nationwide, free-of-charge.

NFSA stays stateside this year

PATTERSON, N.Y.—The Fairmont Chicago in Chicago, Ill. will host the National Fire Sprinkler Association's 2010 Annual Seminar April 15-16. Due to economic conditions, the NFSA Board unanimously endorsed moving the venue from the Hawaiian Islands to the mainland this year.

Full data from AES

By Martha Entwistle

PEABODY, Mass.—AES-Intellinet general manager Tom Kenty said dealers want full data without phone lines, and that, he said, is why they introduced in October a new “7700 FireTAP serial interface for fire monitoring.”

Dealers want “the full information that an addressable fire panel provides, [something] they could get over costly phone lines they can now get over AES-Intellinet with no communications cost,” Kenty said. “They receive [signals] in one to two seconds rather than 45 seconds,” he added.

The product is UL 864, ninth edi-

tion-listed, and works with “a broad range” of fire panels. The FireTAP links a fire alarm control panel with a central monitoring station via AES-IntelliNet wireless mesh networks. The network works with the Internet so customers can monitor alarms in multiple regions from one location. It does not rely on telephone lines or cellular services. **SSN**

John Yusza, Jr.: ‘It’s Business 101’

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his son, John Yusza III, do the bulk of the sales work, he said. Yusza’s daughter, Deborah Yusza-Sokol is chief financial officer of the company.

Many customers come to Monitor Controls. “Ten to 11 percent of our business is takeovers. It’s usually someone who hasn’t received good service. They contact us when they’ve got a system problem and no one else can fix it,” Yusza said. However, the company does not, Yusza emphasized, go after competitors’ clients.

“I don’t chase decals, and I’m not in the headhunting business,” he said.

Once someone becomes a customer, Monitor Controls works hard to keep them, and typically, they’re called in for additional or enhanced fire and security services.

“It’s business 101,” Yusza said. Like the restaurant business, “you’re only as good as your last meal and you’ve got to offer a level of service to keep them happy and coming back.” **SSN**

Training online

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take tests, but they don’t have to travel for every class,” he said.

“Students still need to go to all-day classes two times during the course,” Clary said, noting that there are certain things that require hands-on training. “You can’t learn to bend conduit online,” he said.

Clary and a few others wrote the curriculum for the first semester course and are currently working on finishing the course outlines for the next three semesters.

New York is making headway toward establishing its apprenticeship program under the leadership of Ron Petrarca, Gunning said. There are programs established in Nevada, Mississippi, Louisiana and roughly nine other states have programs in the works. “I know the various apprenticeship programs that are overseen by ESA are using us as their model,” Clary said. **SSN**

Sprinklers

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other groups to promote an integrated approach to fire protection. The goal is “to change code requirements for commercial occupancies to require the proper protection methods for the application rather than the trend toward “sprinklers only,” he said. “Our message is: smoke detection and fire sprinklers save lives.”

Is more cooperation between fire sprinkler and fire detection a trend? Hugo said yes. The NFPA last winter launched The Fire Sprinkler Initiative, a group that promotes the adoption of local ordinances and (NFPA and IRC) model codes.

The battle now moves to the states, Hugo said. The sprinkler-foes have prevailed in North Dakota and Texas, but the sprinkler proponents are making progress here in Maryland, in Florida and in California, he said. **SSN**

Fire-Lite