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**February 28, 2022**

The National Fireproofing Contractors Association (NFCA) is a not-for-profit organization of contractors, manufacturers, equipment suppliers and friends of the association. Some NFCA Contractor Members have agreements with and are signatory to several different union organizations. The NFCA has non-union member companies as well.

There is a union that participates at NFCA Conferences, and been a member for several years. They have demonstrated their education for fireproofing workers at NFCA Conferences. <https://nfca-online.org/Members-List.aspx?select=Unions> Other union organization have not participated at NFCA events in the time that my group has managed the association.

Intumescent Fire-Resistive Materials (IFRM) might look like paint, but IFRM is far from it. The work result is fire-resistive protection subject to very complex tested and listed designs from UL's Product iQ Directory, Intertek Directory, or other Nationally Recognized Testing Agency, and strict manufacturer's installation instructions.

Below are several points to consider about the workforce and fireproofing:

**1. Building Code –**

- a. **Definitions** - The *International Building Code's* (IBC) Chapter 2, Definitions recently changed the name of these materials reflecting the fact that this is fireproofing and not coating materials. In both places, the word coatings is no longer part of the definition:
  - i. **WAS IN IBC '21-** *Intumescent Fire-Resistant Coatings or Mastic Fire-Resistant Coatings*
  - ii. **IS IN IBC '24** - *Intumescent Fire-Resistive Materials*
- b. **IFRM in IBC Ch. 7** - Protection of structural members and assemblies by Fireproofing is located in IBC Chapter 7, *International Building Code, Fire and Smoke Protection Features*.
- c. **Fireproofing Special Inspection in IBC Ch. 17** - IFRM and Sprayed Fire-Resistive Materials (SFRM) Fireproofing Special Inspection is specified in Chapter 17, 1705.15 (SFRM) and 1705.16 (IFRM) an additional quality check that fire tested IFRM fireproofing is applied in accordance with the listing and manufacturer's instructions.

**2. Specifications –**

- a. The Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) and Construction Specifications Canada (CSC) product organization document, *MasterFormat*, shows Intumescent Fire-Resistive Materials work result is fireproofing.
- b. Note, the word Coating is not present in *MasterFormat's* Fireproofing Section for IFRM:
- c. **IFRM Specified in *MasterFormat's* Division 7**
  - i. Division 7, Thermal and Moisture Protection
  - ii. Applied Fireproofing (07-81-00)

iii. 07-81-23 – Intumescent Fire Protection.

3. **Education –**

- a. **NFCA’s IFRM Contractor Accreditation Program** is designed to assure the company and its workforce understand fireproofing test standards, installation practices, inspection and ongoing work to maintain fire-resistance protection.
- b. **Fireproofing workers education and training**, for both SFRM and IFRM, has to focus on fire-resistance tested and listed systems from the UL or other Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory Directory, quality control from NFCA’s, and also application and both self and third-party inspection of fireproofing. This is to train that these IFRM systems are used for fire and life safety.
- c. **NFCA Standard Practices – NFCA 300, *Standard Practice for the application of Intumescent Fire-Resistive Material* and NFCA 400, *Field Quality Assurance Procedure for the Application of Intumescent Fire-Resistive Material***, both provide fireproofing education to the industry.
- d. **NFCA Handbook of Accepted Fireproofing Knowledge –** This document, provides education to fireproofing contractor, inspection and industry personnel.

As stated, NFCA and its Member Contractors have created company quality management accreditation programs that include workforce education as part of the management system process.

The fireproofing employers and fireproofing workers need to understand that fireproofing is to be installed in accordance with a tested and listed design and manufacturers installation instructions, in order to provide fire-resistance protection to buildings for fire and life safety. Otherwise, buildings collapse when exposed to fire.

Fireproofing is not paint to be thinned, cut, and have unlimited tolerances. It needs to be installed as a tested and listed fireproofing assembly, or building element to prevent building collapse. The workforce needs to understand and respect the discipline needed to get fireproofing installed correctly – in accordance with a tested and listed system design, AND manufacturer’s instructions.

Local jurisdictions depend on the employer's historical assignment of the work and local unions supplying available and qualified labor to fireproofing contractors. At NFCA, we have over 130 fireproofing contractor members who award fireproofing work to a workforce that is trained about tested and listed systems and manufacturers installation instructions - fireproofing.

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