

## NFPA 13 Adopts Code Language on Flexible Sprinkler Hose Fittings

By Norman J. MacDonald III

For the first time, the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA 13: Installation of Sprinkler Systems includes code language that clarifies the use of Flexible Sprinkler Hose Fittings and provides applicable guidelines. The new language appears in the 2007 edition of NFPA 13.

This clarification is welcome news for contractors who want the well-documented advantages of flexible fittings. Such fittings typically are faster and easier to install, making installers more productive and reducing backlogs. They also result in simplified project and materials management, and eliminate the need to use oversized rings in order to meet IBC code requirements in seismic areas.

Although flexible fittings have been approved for use for some time by both UL and FM, the addition of code language in NFPA 13 means that engineers and AHJs now have clear guidelines that simplify the product submittal process. Previously, some AHJs interpreted parts of the code to mean that flexibles could not be used pursuant to their installation instructions without being independently supported from the building structure. NFPA 13 now states that Flexible Sprinkler Hose Fittings supported by a suspended ceiling do not have to be supported independently from the building and should be used in accordance with its listings, including installation instructions.

The NFPA 13 Hanging and Bracing Technical Committee reviewed hundreds of pages of engineering data, including product approval standards, testing data, and full independent fire and building code reviews. For example, the Structural Engineering Earthquake Simulation Laboratory at SUNY, University at Buffalo, tested and certified FlexHead Industries' Flexible Sprinkler Hose Fittings against the International Code Council's (ICC) seismic qualification testing criteria. This testing marks the first time a sprinkler component has been seismically certified using test criteria accepted by the ICC. This is an important milestone, particularly because most states are enacting seismic code requirements that

flexibles are especially suited to meet.

"This is really very good news for the construction industry," notes Peter MacDonald, Vice President of FlexHead Industries, Inc. "It clears up some ambiguities that understandably, but unnecessarily, complicated the product

submittal process. It is gratifying confirmation of the clear advantages of Flexible Sprinkler Hose Fittings."

Field response has also been positive.

"We've been using this technology for years, and it helps us complete the installation more efficiently, without punch lists," says R. Colin Barnett, President of Northstar Fire Protection. "Building owners get the code-compliant systems turned over sooner, with

center of tile and cost-effective flexibility for future tenant modifications."

### About FlexHead Industries:

FlexHead Industries, Holliston, Massachusetts, invented and is the premier manufacturer of flexible fire sprinkler connections that use patented flexible stainless steel hose rather than traditional hard pipe arm-overs to connect sprinkler heads to the branch line. The company initially made its name protecting billion dollar semiconductor manufacturing facilities, some of the most demanding and expensive environments on the planet. It has since developed industry-leading flexible fire protection for commercial properties ranging from hotels to office buildings, new construction and retrofits.

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