

Flexible Fire Sprinkler Connections

By Norman J. MacDonald III

Fire protection is experiencing more focus this year than in almost any other of recent memory. Federal, state, and local legislation; code revisions, a broadening awareness of better options, and unfortunately, some horrific events have increased the visibility of fire protection on the radar screens of owners, developers, and management companies. How can flexible sprinkler connections help contractors make the most of these very positive new developments, and how are contractors introducing the flexible option into their offerings?

Contractors and their clients consistently gain time and money through the use of flexible connections. Because of the simplicity of installation, any installer can complete at least four flexible sprinkler connections in the time it takes to do one traditional hard-pipe armover. (Field experience shows that the average ratio is much higher.) This enables the contractor to finish faster by using a normal crew contingent, or to save labor costs by using smaller crews. With this flexibility, contractors can positively impact or accommodate client schedules, which in turn can lead to faster occupancy and improved profitability for the client. Furthermore, the integrity of factory-assembled and tested flexible connections virtually eliminates call-backs associated with traditional, labor-intensive armovers or onsite assembled flexible sprinkler connections.

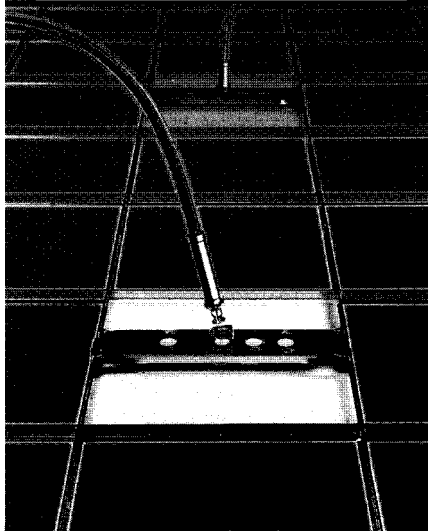
Installation is as Easy as 1-2-3

Each FlexHead flexible sprinkler connection comes complete with a mounting bracket and one-piece, factory-assembled, leak-tested flexible sprinkler head assembly. To install them, first attach the bracket to the ceiling grid; second, connect the flexible sprinkler head assembly to the submain; and third, secure the flexible sprinkler head assembly to the bracket. That's it! The system eliminates hours of fitting and adjustment that hard-pipe requires. It also allows installers to easily and quickly accommodate changes in blueprints. With virtually no leak points, these connections also eliminate the call-backs that are common with hard pipe.

Flexible sprinkler connections can also help facilitate automatic sprinkler installation in previously un-sprinklered

buildings. In contrast to costly and labor-intensive hard-pipe retrofits, factory-assembled flexible sprinkler connections install in minutes, even in the most restricted spaces. During a typical retrofit installation, a minimum of six flexible connections can be installed in the same time it takes to do one hard-pipe armover. Experience shows that flexible connections enable installers to quickly and easily overcome unexpected obstacles such as ducts or wall segments, which in turn significantly reduce the overall installation time.

"The system eliminates hours of fitting and adjustment that hard-pipe requires, and allows installers to easily and quickly accommodate changes in blueprints."



The Future is Definitely Flexible

Already well-known big-box and other retailers are specifying flexible connections for their new and retrofit construction because the benefits are obvious and valuable. Every year, flexible connections represent a higher percentage of installed systems, and that is accelerating. What's the best way for a contractor to get experience with flexible systems and introduce them into his offering?

Many contractors find that using flexible connections in retrofits or service work — particularly in difficult or confined spaces — is an excellent way to get up to speed. The installed cost of flexible systems is at least cost-competitive with hard-pipe, but the material/labor ratio is different. Service work and retrofits provide a track record for many contractors so that when they use flexibles in the larger jobs that will inevitably follow, the contractors are comfortable with the economics and estimating.

The bottom line is that the spotlight on fire protection systems means more business is coming down the pike. Flexible connections enable contractors to handle more of that business and with better profits, more management options, simplified project management, and happier customers.

About the Author:

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