

HISTORY OF FIRE SPRINKLERS

1860: Barnabas Wood, of Nashville, Tennessee, patented the first basic sprinkler, including a eutectic fusible solder link— a foundation for all modern-day sprinklers.

1864: Henry Parmelee produced the first “practical automatic sprinkler.”

1878: Frederick Grinnell, of Providence, Rhode Island, patented a perforated “sprinkler tube” and entered into an agreement with Henry Parmelee to manufacture Parmelee’s sprinklers on a royalty basis.

1881: Grinnell patented the first “sensitive” automatic sprinkler, incorporating modern features such as a ½” orifice and a tooth-edged deflector.

1883: Sir William Mather, of England, acquired rights to the Grinnell sprinkler for the Eastern Hemisphere, including Europe, Australia and India.

1895: Grinnell founded the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in Boston, implementing standards for the installation of automatic fire sprinklers. By 1899, installation requirements for sprinklers became uniform throughout the United States and Canada.

1913: A landmark study showed that after 38 years of fire sprinkler installations, only five people had been killed in fires in sprinklered properties, and a formal Life Safety Code was established by the NFPA.

1920: Grinnell Corporation developed the first quick opening device. One year later, Grinnell released the first Quartzoid sprinkler.

1933: The NFPA issued its first guide to fire departments regarding the use of fire sprinkler systems.

1939: The NFPA adopted a standard on the Care and Maintenance of Sprinkler Systems, taking the industry to the next level in fire protection.

1950: The “NFPA Quarterly” showed sprinklers to have been over 96 percent effective in recorded incidents of fire.

1953: NFPA Pamphlet 13 was revised to recognize what is today’s “standard sprinkler.”

1962: The NFPA issued its first formal standard on foam-water sprinklers and water spray systems, and the first National Sprinkler Industry Seminar was held in Burlingame, California.

1973: Central Sprinkler Company of Lansdale, Pennsylvania pioneered the miniaturization of sprinklers. Two other prominent industry leaders were Star Sprinkler Company and the Grinnell Corporation.

1980: Fire deaths made national headlines when a fire in Las Vegas' MGM Grand Hotel killed 85 guests and workers. Fallout of the tragedy resulted in one of the nation's first fire sprinkler retrofit ordinances for high-rise buildings.

1986: Tyco acquired Grinnell Supply Sales and Manufacturing.

1992: Central Sprinkler Company pioneered and introduced the industry's first ELO (Extra Large Orifice) sprinkler, followed by the introduction of the first "residential shut off valve."

1999: Tyco acquired Central Sprinkler Company, giving Tyco three of the industry's oldest and most recognizable names— Central, Gem and Star.

2002: Tyco Fire Products introduced the industry's first Extended Coverage sprinkler for Storage.

2005: NFPA mandated Life Safety Code (NFPA 101).

2006: Tyco launches the Rapid Response™ home fire sprinkler brand, designed specifically for widespread residential application.