



Tuesday e-Tech Alert

December 19, 2006

Number 72

NFSA Releases Details of its “Top Tech” Competition

The National Fire Sprinkler Association has released the rules for its “Top Tech” competition, including the regional qualifiers that will lead to a final competition at the Annual Seminar and Exhibition in Las Vegas May 3-4, 2007:

1. Only employees of NFSA member companies will be allowed to participate in the competition. Individuals interested in the competition will contact the appropriate person listed below based on their location. The deadline for indicating interest in participating is January 10, 2007. Individuals should provide their name, their member company affiliation, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Individuals will be notified no later than January 20, 2007 of testing dates and locations.
2. The contest will start with a 2-hour open-book examination based on the 2002 edition of NFPA 13 offered at various locations. The examination will include a section of multiple-choice or short-answer questions, a section requiring a hydraulic calculation by hand, and a section relating to sprinkler layout within a building plan. The examinations will be completed by February 14, 2007 and subsequently graded. The only materials that anyone will need to take the exam are a copy of the 2002 edition of NFPA 13 and a calculator with a y^x (raise to a power) function. Computers will not be permitted in the test area. After taking the test, individuals are expected not to reveal the contents of the test to anyone that might be taking the test in the future.
3. By the end of February, the three individuals scoring highest from an area will be offered spots on the team from that area, with the fourth-place finisher designated the official alternate. However, only one individual from a company can be part of the team for any geographic area. In the event a successful contestant declines the position, the offer will be given to the next place finisher who is eligible. Individual scores will not be given back to the participants.
4. Team members from each area (including the alternate) will be given a free two-day registration to the NFSA Annual Seminar in Las Vegas on May 3-4, 2007. Each individual participating in the Las Vegas finals will also be given a travel and subsistence subsidy of \$500 following participation. There is no requirement that the individuals stay at the seminar hotel.
5. At the NFSA Annual Seminar, the teams will compete in a panel format, similar to a television game show. Preliminary competitions will take place in the exhibition hall on Thursday, May 3rd, with the final held in the exhibition hall on Friday, May 4th.

Applicant Location

Northeast
(CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT)

Mid-Atlantic
(DC, DE, MD, NJ, PA, VA)

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Q&A on the Top Tech Competition

Anticipating some questions on the “Top Tech” competition, the NFSA staff has assembled the following Q&A entries:

Question 1 - Pipe friction loss tables - Will technicians be allowed to bring their own, will they provided at the test, or will it be necessary to use formulae for determining pipe friction losses?

Answer: Friction loss tables will not be provided. The test is open book, using the rules that NICET has established. Included in NICET's rules are the concepts that the material brought into the test must be in a book (no loose sheets of paper) and that the books are not allowed to have handwritten notes in them. The concept is to use the books as the reference material, but not allow people to write the answers to the questions in a book that they bring in. You can bring friction loss tables if desired (if bound into a book),

but the questions are going to be asked in such a way that will favor individuals with calculators that know the friction loss equations over individuals who use tables.

Question 2 - Hydraulic calculation forms - Will technicians be allowed to bring their own or will they be provided at the test?

Answer: Forms and blank pages (for scratch paper) will be provided with the test in sufficient quantity so that individuals that know what they are doing are able to answer the questions. As stated above, loose papers will not be permitted.

Question 3 - Miscellaneous formulas, conversion tables, etc. - Will technicians be allowed to bring their own or will they provided at the test?

Answer 3: Formulas and conversion tables will not be provided with the test. Anyone taking the exam will be expected to have basic formulas memorized or know where to find them in NFPA 13. Sheets of formulas or conversion tables will not be allowed unless they are in a book (per Question 1). Individual pages that are 3-hole punched and included in a three-ring binder are considered "in a book" and will be allowed, just as they are allowed by NICET.

Question 4 - Drafting equipment, etc. - Will technicians be allowed to bring their own, or will they provided at the test?

Answer: Drafting equipment will not be provided. Individuals should bring their own. A straight edge at least 12 inches long, a template to make small symbols (circles, triangles, etc) and a few sharp pencils should be all that is needed.

Question 5 – Slide rules - Would a slide rule be appropriate?

Answer: There are two types of slide rules used in the industry. The first type was used before there were calculators for doing basic math. The second type was developed in the 1970's to help people that did not have a calculator with a "raise to a power" function to do hydraulics. Either will be permitted, but neither is required.

Question 6 – Exam results - Will results of the regional examinations be given to the contestants? Will they be released publicly?

Answer: No. The NFSA will be announcing the four people that form each team, but it should be recognized that they may or may not be the top scoring individuals due to the "one person per company per team" rule. The purpose of the test is solely to identify the teams for each region.

Question 7 – Validity of results - Although the competition sounds like it could be a lot of fun and offer some recognition to well-deserved people, will this really determine the best technicians in the industry? After all, many of today's technicians rely extensively on computers and industry-specific programming.

Answer: Yes, we think that the regional tests will be relevant and will help us determine some of the better design technicians. The design technicians that rely on computers but don't understand the fundamental concepts about what they are doing and why are not the best technicians. The best technicians are those that understand the rules as well as the concepts that apply to fire protection. They work within the rules to prepare the least expensive, but still functionally sound fire protection system.

NICET Clarifies Position on NICET Level III

In response to the concerns expressed by the NFSA and others relative to an apparent change in policy on the part of NICET (eTechAlert No. 68), the NICET Board of Governors reconsidered its position. NICET General Manager Mike Clark has forwarded a clarification of NICET's position:

NICET's current and official position is that individuals holding a NICET Level III and/or a NICET Level IV certification in Automatic Sprinkler System Layout have the qualifications to independently prepare layout drawings on behalf of fire sprinkler contractors. The current NICET certification program recognizes that Level III certificate holders are regularly engaged in the layout and detailing of automatic sprinkler systems with little, or no, daily supervision. Therefore, we will support this position to the Illinois State Fire Marshal and other AHJs in the future as appropriate.

The NFSA appreciates the fact that NICET was willing to reconsider its earlier statements and thanks all of those who took the time to express their concerns to NICET.

Upcoming NFSA Technical Tuesday Online Seminar – January 16th

Topic: Changes to NFPA 13 Definitions and System/Component Requirements

Instructor: Russell P. Fleming, P.E., NFSA Executive Vice President

Date: January 16, 2007

This seminar is the first of a series of ten on changes to the 2007 editions of NFPA 13, 13D, 13R, 20 and 24. In the new 2007 edition of NFPA 13, there are some significant changes in Chapters 1 through 7. This seminar will explore the new definitions used throughout the new standard, the changes to the requirements regarding individual system components, and changes to the performance requirements for systems, including the TIA on water delivery requirements for dry-pipe systems that was issued on both the 2007 and 2002 editions of the standard. Even if you will not be using the 2007 edition of NFPA 13, you will find that the changes and clarifications will affect your understanding of the requirements of earlier editions.

Information and registration for this seminar is available at www.nfsa.org or by calling Dawn Fitzmaurice at 845-878-4200 ext. 133.

NFSA Sets 2007 Schedule for 3-day Advanced Technician Training and NICET Inspector Certification Review Classes

The NFSA Engineering Department has set up the following classes for open registration:

May 22-24	ITM NICET Review	Anchorage, AK
June 19-21	ITM NICET Review	Wilmington, DE
July 24-26	Advanced Technician Training	Chicago, IL
August 14-16	ITM NICET Review	San Antonio, TX
September 5-7	Advanced Technician Training	St Louis, MO
November 6-8	ITM NICET Review	Providence, RI

For more information, contact Nicole Sprague at 845-878-4200 ext. 149 or email: Sprague@nfsa.org.

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conclusions are based on the best judgment of the NFSA Engineering staff, and are not the official position of the NFPA or its technical committees or those of other organizations except as noted. Opinions expressed herein are not intended, and should not be relied upon, to provide professional consultation or services. Please send comments to Russell P. Fleming, P.E. fleming@nfsa.org.

In the promotion of the fire sprinkler concept, the National Fire Sprinkler Association represents all fire sprinkler industry interests including fire sprinkler contractors, manufacturers and suppliers of fire sprinklers and related equipment and fire protection professionals. Established in 1905, the National Fire Sprinkler Association provides publications, nationally accredited seminars, representation in codes and standards-making, market development, labor relations and other services to its membership. Headquartered in Patterson, New York, the National Fire Sprinkler Association has regional operations offices throughout the country.