



UConn Does Its Homework!

Protecting the property of a large university is not an easy assignment. Unlike a large manufacturing facility or a multistory office building, the existing hazards are many and varied. There are multiple campuses...there are many buildings on each campus...and each of those buildings—administration buildings, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, dormitories, sports arenas and maintenance facilities—house a different occupancy. And, because no two universities are alike, there is not a one-size-fits-all type of protection—even for similar buildings.

There are many ways to properly protect property but, according to test results by FM Global, automatic sprinklers have proven to be the single most important safeguard for the varied occupancies of a university. A National Fire Protection Association study published in 2000, *U.S. Dormitory Fire Standards*, finds properly installed and maintained sprinkler systems are capable of preventing damage outside the area of a fire's

origin “in all but a few unusual situations.” Since that time, an increasing number of states, cities and towns have enhanced fire protection at their educational institutions through automatic sprinkler legislation.

At the University of Connecticut (UConn), university officials took this data very seriously and embarked on two major projects—taking an inventory of all sprinkler valves that control the automatic sprinkler system and the water supply that feeds the system, and establishing an inspection routine.

According to Kosta Terzides, group manager, field engineering, Boston (Mass., USA) operations, FM Global has been encouraging UConn to develop an inspection routine for several years. “Because automatic sprinklers are so crucial to fire protection, you must know the location of the sprinkler control valves and which sprinklers they control—and, most importantly, if they are in an open position,” said Terzides.



“We recognized the importance of the project, but delayed implementing it because it was a huge undertaking,” said UConn’s Fire Chief Francis Williams. “Once we decided to move ahead, it took one person, Lt. Dana Barrows, a member of UConn’s fire department, one year to pinpoint the location of each sprinkler valve. We started with a list of valves from the contractors who installed them in new construction on campus, then traced additional valves in pre-existing buildings.”



Heidi Vasseur, a member of UConn’s fire department, checks to see if control valves are in “open” or “locked” position.

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Dave Santos, who visits several colleges and universities as part of his job as senior engineering and MFL (maximum foreseeable loss) specialist for FM Global’s Boston operations, spent several years working closely with UConn staff, particularly the members of the school’s fire department. “We offered many resources in the form of manpower and equipment to show how serious we were about accomplishing this monumental task,” said Santos.

James O’Brien, consultant engineer, Boston operations, assisted Santos by spending several weeks looking at plans and walking through all the sprinklered buildings on the main campus in Storrs, Conn., USA, while members of

UConn’s fire department inventoried all sprinkler control valves. “We’re talking about more than 1,000 sprinkler control valves that control thousands and thousands of sprinklers,” said O’Brien. “Some control one or two sprinklers, some control hundreds. They noted the location of every single one and bar-coded all equipment. In addition, they inventoried about 1,500 hose connections—and documented each piece of equipment.”

According to Williams, more than 130 sprinklered residential and academic buildings—out of 300-plus buildings on the Storrs campus—were included in the inventory.

A Book for Every Library's Collection



UConn Firefighter Paul Burton conducts monthly inspection of sprinkler control valves.

Once the inventory was complete, the fire department entered the data into a spreadsheet. Now, they've established an inspection routine that includes assigning members of the fire department to a monthly inspection during which specific buildings and sprinkler control valves are checked. "Our staff takes bar-code readers and walks through each building inspecting each control valve and ensuring it's in an open or locked position," said Williams. "It takes one month to complete the inspection, and then we start the cycle again."

Williams said his department was able to complete the inventory because of the help it received from FM Global engineers and acknowledged that, moving forward, all new construction at the University of Connecticut will incorporate the bar-code ID system, along with an appropriate inspection schedule.

"It was a large undertaking, but a successful one, due in large part to the expertise and guidance from FM Global," said Williams, which just goes to show that not all education takes place in the classroom.

According to John Byrne, account manager, Boston operations, the progress that has been made is gratifying to all who invested time and effort in this project. "The sprinkler valve inventory and inspection process is a 'cornerstone' in the establishment of a well-protected facility," said Byrne. "We look forward to continued progress at this facility and, more importantly, further development of a mutually beneficial relationship between FM Global and UConn."



While it's not on *The New York Times* bestseller list, the soon-to-be-released newly revised *Risk and Insurance Manual for Libraries*

(published by the American Library Association) is a good read if you are associated with a library—large or small, public or private, academic or government—in the United States and Canada. It's a ready reference guide that provides good, solid advice for librarians and others interested in protecting libraries, which can sometimes house irreplaceable collections.

Originally published in 1971 as an *Insurance Manual for Libraries* by Gerald Myers, the new version addresses the broader concept of risk management—specifically, how it's a more comprehensive concept, of which insurance is only one part. Co-authors are Mary Breighner, FM Global's practice leader for education, public entities and health care, and Bill Payton, risk manager, University of Missouri.

Breighner was recommended for the project by a librarian from a client university and decided to participate in the project because there are so many changes taking place in university libraries. She brought years of experience to the project. Prior to joining FM Global in 1995, she was a risk manager at Columbia University for 17 years. She also was recently elected the

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first affiliate member of the University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA) Board of Directors (see sidebar).

According to Breighner, the revision is long overdue because so many changes are taking place in the world of academia. In fact, she suggests future editions be updated every five years to keep up with the progress in this area.

“The first edition was strictly an insurance manual,” said Breighner. “The updated version takes a look at the risk management process for a university library, including the identification, measurement and quantification of risk. It targets property loss prevention and control.”

This revised manual goes into more detail than the original, including chapters on the risk management process, which helps identify, analyze, prevent and control risk; risk financing; insurance coverage; and many other resources including information on contingency planning, security guidelines and checklists.

Colleges and universities require unique protection because of the wide and varied occupancies. “On any one campus, you can find dormitories, athletic buildings, libraries, laboratories and administration facilities. Major research universities and those associ-

ated with hospitals spend hundreds of millions of dollars on research,” she said. “A fire could destroy months and years of work.”

“Universities have changed the way they think about protecting their property,” she said. “As a result of several dormitory fires, New Jersey (USA) and other states have passed legislation requiring all student residences to be fully sprinklered.” Libraries, too, are being protected by automatic sprinklers.

“It’s particularly important to protect libraries because they house educational materials, research data and

numerous information sources,” said Breighner. “In some cases, they have special collections that are irreplaceable. A university needs to continue its education and research mission without interruption, so it behooves the institution to aggressively protect its library.”

According to Breighner, working on the project gave her a unique opportunity to share her expertise in the field. “I’m glad I had the privilege of working on this book,” she said. “It was totally different from my ‘day’ job and gave me a chance to assist colleges and universities throughout North America—without leaving my office.”

URMIA Can Benefit You

The University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA) can benefit your institution in a number of ways, including providing resources to assist your efforts toward:

- protecting your educational institution’s assets against financial loss;
- ensuring a safe and healthy campus environment for students, faculty and staff; and
- implementing risk management programs to prevent or mitigate losses associated with daily accidents and catastrophes.

URMIA’s annual meeting is a valuable resource for learning and networking, while its e-mail listserv consistently receives high ratings from members who can ask questions and, typically, receive 10 to 20 responses in just a few hours. In fact, 250 risk management opinions are available at the press of a key. Additionally, URMIA sponsors a mentoring program and publishes a quarterly newsletter, an annual journal and a resource list, “Ask a Risk Manager.”

For more information, visit URMIA’s Web site at <http://www.urmia.org>.