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Spring 2022

A Fire Emergency Isn't the Time to Put Your Sprinkler System to the Test

Sprinklers save lives and reduce injuries. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), "Compared to reported fires in properties with no automatic extinguishing systems (AES), when sprinklers were present, the civilian fire death and injury rates per fire were 89% and 27% lower, respectively."¹

Sprinklers also protect assets and reduce the impact of fires. "Fire spread was confined to the object or room of origin in 95% of reported structure fires in which sprinkler systems were present."¹

The problem is that fire suppression or protection systems are often installed and forgotten. As a result, many building owners assume that left to itself, the system will activate in the event of a fire, and otherwise, it will not.

But fire suppression systems are not "set it and forget it." They must be maintained. System manufacturers, installers, regulators, and insurers know this and recommend periodic safety and operational tests. But, in the real world, preventive maintenance is often forgotten, scheduled but not completed, or intentionally postponed. Omission or decision, all are short-sighted.

The consequences may manifest terribly in one of two ways—the most dramatic being the failure to operate when needed—in response to fire. Compared to the life- and property-saving benefits of proper activation, the impacts of a system failure during a fire have the potential for



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being no less than tragic.

In the article, "Lessons Learned from Unsatisfactory Sprinkler Performance," Fire Protection Engineering, 2010, Quarter 4 issue, the authors categorized the root causes of unsatisfactory sprinkler performance:

"Failure to maintain operational status of the system." This ranges from neglecting regular inspection, testing, and maintenance to shutting off the water supply before or during a fire.

"Failure to assure adequacy of the system and/or for the complete coverage

of current hazard." This includes issues with initial system planning or installation and changes to the structure or its contents.

"Defects affecting, but not involving, the sprinkler system." Instead, these defects relate to the water supply or building construction.

"Inadequate performance by the sprinkler itself." A failure of the system or component.

Other situations.¹

In addition to regularly scheduled preventative maintenance, other

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Aim For The Right Target

Your organization won't grow unless you and your team are working toward goals. Setting the right goals, though—goals that will inspire and motivate—is crucial. Aim for goals that are:

- **Quantifiable.** You should be able to measure success in objective terms so everyone can see the value of your efforts.
- **Challenging.** If it's too easy, chances are your objective won't have significant impact on your organization.
- **Business focused.** Set a goal that supports your organization's agenda, not one that just makes you or your department look good.
- **Realistic.** Although challenge is important, pursuing an impossible dream will result only in a morale-crushing letdown.
- **Flexible.** Don't back yourself into a corner. Although you don't want to adjust your goal to suit your results, be willing to modify your ambitions if circumstances yank your original objective out of reach.

Still A Champion

Charlie Boswell was an all-American athlete who was offered professional contracts in both football and baseball. But when WWII erupted, Charlie enlisted in the military and was assigned to a tank division.

During a battle in Europe, a shell hit Charlie's tank. As the tank burned, he made sure everyone else got out safely, but then a second shell hit, throwing him 50 feet, breaking his bones and burning his body.

After a week-long coma, Charlie woke up in a hospital and learned that he'd be blind for the rest of his life. Refusing to be discouraged, he worked hard at his rehabilitation, learning to live in a world of darkness.

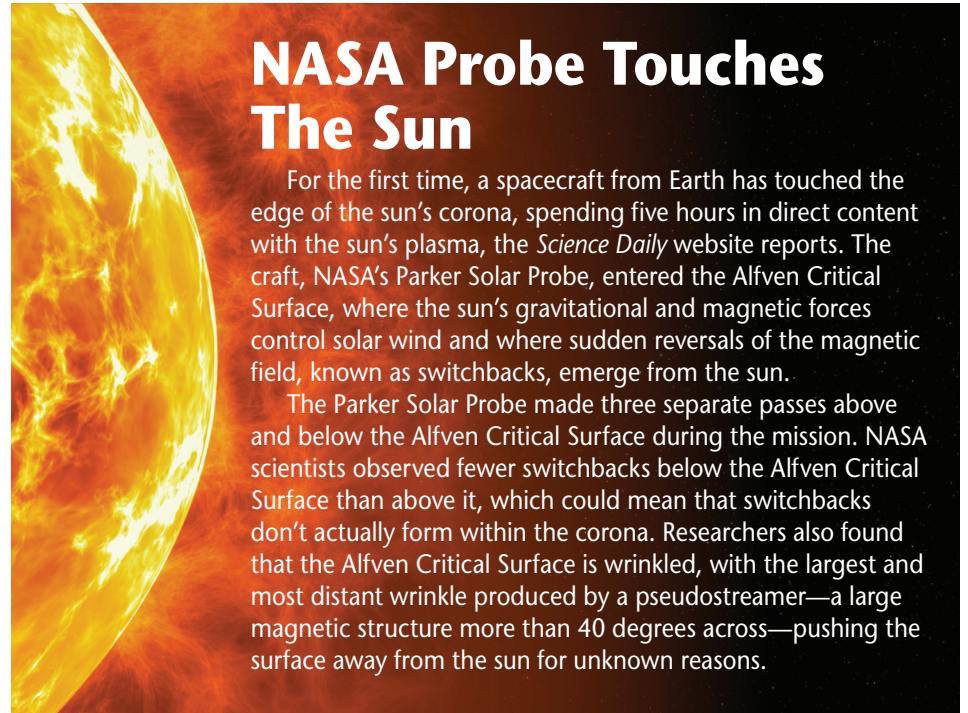
One day a friend came to visit him. "Would you like to play some golf?" he asked.

"How in the world can I hit a golf ball when I can't even see it?" Charlie asked, but the friend was persistent. He took Charlie to a golf course, showed him how to hold and swing a club, and let him hit the ball.

Charlie's first drive traveled 200 yards straight down the fairway.

Charlie began training, and slowly his abilities improved. Ultimately Charlie won a world championship, shooting a 38 on nine holes.

The moral is: There is always an alternate route if you just have the will to find it.



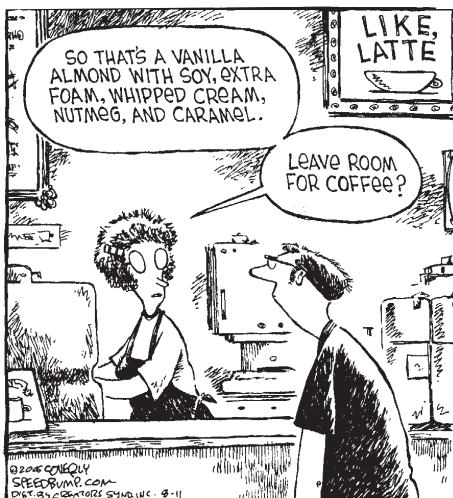
NASA Probe Touches The Sun

For the first time, a spacecraft from Earth has touched the edge of the sun's corona, spending five hours in direct contact with the sun's plasma, the *Science Daily* website reports. The craft, NASA's Parker Solar Probe, entered the Alfvén Critical Surface, where the sun's gravitational and magnetic forces control solar wind and where sudden reversals of the magnetic field, known as switchbacks, emerge from the sun.

The Parker Solar Probe made three separate passes above and below the Alfvén Critical Surface during the mission. NASA scientists observed fewer switchbacks below the Alfvén Critical Surface than above it, which could mean that switchbacks don't actually form within the corona. Researchers also found that the Alfvén Critical Surface is wrinkled, with the largest and most distant wrinkle produced by a pseudostreamer—a large magnetic structure more than 40 degrees across—pushing the surface away from the sun for unknown reasons.

SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly



More People Sought Mental Health Care During The Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on people's mental health. That's no surprise, but the good news is it suggests that more Americans may be open to seeking mental health care.

The number of psychologists who reported receiving more referrals in 2021 nearly doubled from 2020 (from 37% to 62%). Almost 7 in 10 psychologists (68%) with a waitlist reported that it had grown longer since the start of the pandemic.

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) found that the percentage of adults who had received mental health treatment in the past 12 months rose from 19.2% in 2019 to 20.3% in 2020—almost one in five people. Of those seeking mental health assistance, 16.5% received prescriptions for medication, and 10.1% got counseling or therapy. The survey found that older people tended to get medications, while younger were more likely to seek counseling. Women were more likely than men to seek out mental health care.

Make The Ripples Stop

A troubled monk went to his Abbott for guidance. After listening intently to his problems, the Abbott asked the monk to join him on a walk.

They arrived at a pond near the back of the monastery. The Abbott asked the monk to pick up a stone and toss it into the center of the pond. The monk complied.

"Now," said the Abbott, "as the ripples come closer to the shore, stick your finger in the water to try to stop them."

The monk tried, but as he stuck his finger in the water, he just created more ripples. Confused, he looked at his mentor. "Abbott, I can't. My actions just cause more ripples."

The Abbott smiled. "So, you cannot stop the ripples?"

"Correct," said the monk.

"But could you have stopped yourself from tossing the stone into the pond in the first place?"

Often we spend a lot of time trying to get rid of a problem instead of fixing what's causing it. Trying to treat the symptom is like trying to stop the ripples. However, if you eliminate the actual cause of the problem, the ripples go away altogether.

"The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra."

—Jimmy Johnson

Protect Your Security When You Travel Near Or Far

Business and personal travel are coming back after the pandemic. If you haven't gone out of town in a while, you may need a refresher course on staying safe and secure on the road. Here's some guidance from the *Travel Daily News* website:

- **Choose the right room location.** Request a room between the third and sixth floor. It's high enough that burglars can't easily climb up onto a balcony and get inside, and low enough for firefighters to reach you in an emergency.
- **Bring a "go bag."** Pack a small bag with essentials—important documents, some cash, water, some nonperishable snacks—that you can grab if you have to leave your hotel quickly because of an evacuation for fire, an earthquake, or some other disaster.
- **Pay attention to your surroundings.** Identify exits immediately whenever you walk into a new environment. When you check in to your hotel, take a look around the lobby for anyone watching you suspiciously. In the hall outside your hotel room, take note of what direction the nearest stairwell is, and how far down the hall you'll have to go to get to it. It's a good idea to count the number of doors between your room and the exit. In the event of a fire or other emergency, you may not have good lighting and may need to crawl to the nearest exit counting doors as you go.
- **Pack a doorstop.** This can be the most important item you can bring to protect your safety. Don't depend on the hotel's own locks to keep your door secure. A simple doorstop wedged under your door can stop or slow a would-be intruder, giving you time to call the front desk or the police. You can even buy them with a built-in alarm.
- **Only use password-protected Wi-Fi networks.**

This tip is important, especially if you're traveling abroad. Other countries may not have the same regulations on public Wi-Fi as the U.S. does, so choosing a password-protected network, like the ones offered at most major hotels, is likely your safest bet if you need to access the Internet while traveling.



Test Your Knowledge

1. How old was King Tut when he died?
 - a. 6
 - b. 12
 - c. 19
 - d. 28
2. Where was gunpowder invented?
 - a. Morocco
 - b. China
 - c. Germany
 - d. Sri Lanka
3. King Henry VIII had a collection of more than 6,000 what?
 - a. rings
 - b. handguns
 - c. paintings
 - d. wigs
4. Which ocean is surrounded by the "ring of fire"?
 - a. Arctic
 - b. Atlantic
 - c. Indian
 - d. Pacific
5. Which country has, on average, the tallest men?
 - a. The United States
 - b. The Netherlands
 - c. Japan
 - d. Brazil

ANSWERS: 1. c; 2. b; 3. b; 4. d; 5. b

—How Stuff Works

A Fire Emergency... *continued from page 1*

circumstances should trigger a second look to head off potential issues.

Structure changes: A fire suppression system's proper design and operation depend on the structure's occupancy and use; any change in either would require a re-evaluation. Other reasons for re-reviewing the system include physical modifications, painting, repairs, and adding or moving equipment or inventory.

Damage to system components or controllers: From accidents, such as a collision with a forklift, contact by a falling object, or a bump from nearby work, to intentional vandalism.

Weather: During cold weather, water or moisture in pipes in unheated areas may freeze and create significant issues. 42% of system failures or malfunctions and 36% of unintentional activations occur December through February, according to the NFPA.¹

Operating Environment: A harsh working environment can cause corrosion, clogging, or damage to sprinkler heads, valves, or components failures. For example, high humidity, harsh chemicals, cooling systems, equipment overheating, or even the presence of dirt or dust particles can increase the risk of system failure.

Personnel Changes: As a matter of course, the onboarding and training of new maintenance staff should include a tour and inspection of the fire suppression system. In addition, new insurance underwriters and AHJs may also request a tour and maintenance review.

A do-it-yourself approach using internal staff for fire sprinkler system preventive maintenance raises critical issues. Company personnel likely will not have the appropriate expertise, licensing requirements, certified equipment, and awareness of industry best practices and local, state, and national codes and

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A Fire Emergency... *continued from above*

regulatory requirements. Instead, entrust a professional service provider who does. Research prospective partners to ensure the selected provider is:

- easy to work with;
- experienced, licensed, and referenced;
- focused on safety;
- in good standing and has a strong rapport with local fire departments;
- available and reliable;
- focused on their client's ROI.

A fire protection testing program ensures the timely and professional implementation of required activities. At PSI, the benefits of a typical fire protection testing program include:

- worry-free, customized service including reminders, scheduling, and archiving completed testing reports;

- identification and addressing minor issues before they become big problems;
- on-demand 24-hour, 7-days-a-week priority emergency service;
- priority scheduling of service work;
- complete and timely reporting;
- the ongoing availability of critical system records, such as alarm panel type, a contact name for alarm panel shut-off, and model numbers of equipment;
- the flexibility of scheduling and invoicing.

Call us today to help you with maintaining your fire protection system at 508.644.2221.

¹Source: *US Experience with Sprinklers*, Marty Ahrens, October 2021, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)



We're doing our part!

