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History of the National Fire Protection Association

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07-Nov-2024

The National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) is a trusted and respected fixture in the lives of safety professionals across the globe. As a self-funded nonprofit, the association strives to help save lives and reduce loss with information, knowledge, and passion.

Today, more than 10,000 volunteers make up the more than 250 [technical committees](#) responsible for publishing NFPA codes and standards. Tens of thousands of professionals are part of the vast network of [NFPA membership](#).

But did you know that NFPA began as one small group of insurance professionals seeking to address a challenge related to fire sprinkler installations [more than 125 years ago](#)? Read on to learn more about the beginnings of the National Fire Protection Association, and [explore our "About Us" page](#) to learn more about today's NFPA.

A consistent approach to fire sprinkler installations

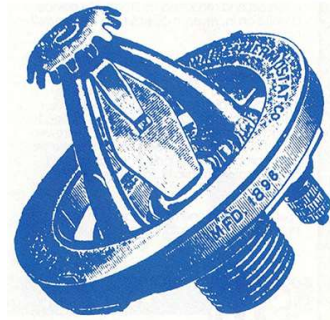
The story of NFPA starts in the late 1800s. It was a time when manufacturing was thriving in the United States, especially in cities across the northeast. But losses, including losses from fire, were an ever-present threat. And insurance companies were paying for the damages inflicted by the frequent flames.

Fire sprinkler technology was also gaining steam in the U.S. around this time. The first U.S. patents for fire sprinkler systems emerged in the 1870s. More advanced designs sprung up during the next decade, and as designs improved, sprinkler use and testing began to grow. But there was a critical problem.

"With the technology's rising popularity, they were being widely installed, but they were being installed inconsistently, and it was fast becoming a plumber's nightmare," Casey Grant, former executive director of the [Fire Protection Research Foundation](#), wrote in an article marking the 100th anniversary of NFPA. "Something had to be done."

So, in 1895, a number of insurance and property protection professionals met for the first time in Boston to discuss how to address this challenge. They discussed how, at the time, nine different standards for fire sprinkler piping size and spacing were being used within a 100-mile radius of Boston, as well as evidence and research that was beginning to mount regarding which installation methods worked best.

The group continued meeting, and following one such meeting in March 1896 released the "Report of Committee on Automatic Sprinkler Protection," which would eventually become [NFPA 13, Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems](#). At a subsequent meeting on **November 6, 1896**, the group voted to start an entire organization dedicated to advancing fire safety. "This organization shall be known as the National Fire Protection Association," the approved article stated, and NFPA was officially born.



A new 'National Electrical Code'

Interestingly, the story of codifying electrical safety in the United States follows a very similar path to that of automatic fire sprinklers. As the built environment was becoming more and more electrified in the late 1800s, a fragmented collection of safety standards addressing electrical installations had also emerged.

"Much like the sprinkler world that was saddled with numerous different standards, the electrical community also found itself dealing from a deck of available standards," Grant writes. "By the end of 1895, there were five different recognized standards in the United States that addressed the safe use of electrical equipment. Five different codes meant five different sets of rules for making an electrical installation. This, of course, created significant confusion and controversy. Something had to be done to produce a national code on a national scale."

At a meeting in New York in March 1896—coincidentally, on the very same day the "Report of Committee on Automatic Sprinkler Protection" was also released after a New York meeting—a group called the Joint Conference of Electrical and Allied Interests formed. This group would later go on to create and publish the National Electrical Code of 1897. And in 1911, the work to periodically revise and publish new editions of this document was transferred to NFPA. Today, [NFPA 70®, National Electrical Code® \(NEC®\)](#), is one of the documents NFPA is most known for.

Growth, diversification, and the future

Throughout the early 1900s, NFPA grew rapidly, both in the number of people and organizations involved with the association as well as in the number of codes and standards it offered. Despite the word "National" in its name, the first international members joined NFPA in 1903. In 1904, rules addressing membership were changed to open the doors to many individuals and organizations outside of the world of fire insurance.

As was the case with the origins of NFPA 13 and the NEC, emerging hazards and tragic events continued to shape the breadth of NFPA offerings

over the years.

After 146 people—mostly young immigrant women—died in the [Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire](#) in New York City in 1911, for example, NFPA developed the NFPA Committee on Safety to Life in 1913, which would later become [NFPA 101®](#), [Life Safety Code®](#). In more recent history, devastating fires such as the Ghost Ship warehouse fire in Oakland, California, in 2016, which killed 36 people, and the Grenfell Tower fire in London in 2017, which killed 72 people, led to the development of the [NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem™](#).

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As voyagers in time on a journey not yet completed, we must all work together throughout the world to continue with NFPA as the premier organization for reducing the burden of fire and related hazards.

Today, NFPA publishes [more than 300 codes and standards](#), spanning every area of fire, life, and electrical safety. From its most widely used documents, such as NFPA 13, the NEC, and NFPA 101, to lesser-known but equally important documents like [NFPA 150, Fire and Life Safety in Animal Housing Facilities Code](#), there is little the association doesn't touch in some way.

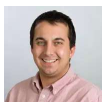
NFPA is about much more than codes and standards today, too, offering [training](#) and [certification](#) to a wide range of safety professionals; delivering [news, articles, and information](#) on industry trends and emerging safety concerns; publishing [research](#) on the latest fire statistics; and leading [public education](#) campaigns like [Fire Prevention Week™](#).

Although it's been nearly 30 years since Grant's article on the centennial anniversary of NFPA, his words are no less true today than they were then: "Today the NFPA is strong and ready for the future. ... As voyagers in time on a journey not yet completed, we must all work together throughout the world to continue with the NFPA as the premier organization for reducing the burden of fire and related hazards."

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Great resume about NFPA History. And beginning of technical committees and importance of work together to reduce the burner of fire and related hazards.

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