UL Fire Alarm Certification Program

A valuable but misunderstood resource for jurisdictions

By Howard Hopper / *Regulatory Services Program Coordinator*

Fire alarm systems play a key role in safeguarding life and property, and the NFPA 72 National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code includes requirements to ensure that these critical systems operate when they are most needed. Proper system design, installation, periodic testing and maintenance are critical elements for protecting the citizens in our communities.

Fire authorities are responsible for making sure required fire alarm systems are installed in accordance with model code requirements. They work with alarm company professionals to ensure safe, code compliant installations are provided. However, once systems are installed it is often a challenge for jurisdictions to verify that they continue to operate as intended.

The UL fire alarm certificate program is an excellent resource for jurisdictions to use to verify that these systems will continue to be tested and maintained after their initial system acceptance. UL's technical support is especially valuable for jurisdictions whose dwindling budgets require them to accomplish their mission with fewer resources.

Brand Protection

Code authorities, consumers and retailers expect products bearing a UL Mark to comply with applicable safety and other requirements. UL is committed to taking whatever action is necessary to protect the integrity of its Marks against counterfeiting and other supply chain diversions. This is done through an aggressive anti-counterfeiting program, and by providing guidance and strategies to help businesses manage the security of their supply chain and protect their brand against counterfeiting and gray market diversion.

For additional information on UL's brand protection and supply chain security advisory services see http://www.ul.com/global/eng/pages/solutions/services/advisoryandeducation/

A Strong Foundation

By Howard Hopper / *Managing Editor*

These days most companies, jurisdictions and agencies have a mission statement. This statement is intended to guide the actions of the organization, spell out its overall goal, provide a path for achieving the goal, and guide decision-making. Some organizations take their mission seriously while others just create one that sounds good because everyone else has one.

As a long time UL employee I have seen our mission statement evolve over the years to account for changes in our business, our industry and society. But one thing has always remained constant. The UL mission has always reflected the basic principles and values established by the company's founder, William Henry Merrill, over 100 years ago.

UL's current mission includes eight elements, ranging from promoting a safe living and working environment to being a good example of corporate citizenship and social responsibility. It is evident to me that these are not merely slogans that sound good in principle but get lost in practice. The mission has always been the very foundation of who UL is, it drives every decision UL makes.

I am proud to be associated with UL, and equally proud of our mission. Check it out at www.ul.com/global/eng/pages/aboutul/ourmission/ and let me know what you think.

INTRODUCING UL FIRE DOOR INSPECTION SERVICE

By Howard Hopper / *Regulatory Services Program Coordinator*

Fire doors are an integral part of a building's safety system. During everyday use, a fire door seems just like any other door. But when a fire occurs, these doors prevent fire from spreading from the area of origin to other protected areas within the building. UL has established a fire door inspection program to help property owners and code authorities confirm that existing fire doors remain code compliant and operational.

The NFPA 80 Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives regulates the installation and maintenance of assemblies and devices used to protect openings in walls, floors, and ceilings against the spread of fire and smoke within, into, or out of buildings. Section 5.2.1 requires fire door assemblies to be inspected and tested not less than annually, and that a written, signed record of the inspection be retained for review by the AHJ. This requirement recognizes that fire doors, shutters, and windows are of no value unless they are properly maintained and closed or are able to close at the time of fire. NFPA 80 recommends that a periodic inspection and maintenance program be implemented and is the responsibility of the property management.

The NFPA 101 Life Safety Code also requires certain doors in specified occupancies to be inspected and tested not less than annually, and the International Fire Code requires openings in required fire walls, fire barriers and fire partitions to be maintained in accordance with NFPA 80.

These code requirements have led some building owners and facility managers to seek qualified, independent organizations such as UL to conduct detailed annual fire door inspections to determine if their buildings remain in compliance with the previously referenced code requirements.

Accordingly, UL established a fire door inspection program in which UL field representatives visit the respective location and conduct a detailed inventory and comprehensive inspection of all designated fire doors. The inspection is designed to determine compliance with all applicable NFPA 80 periodic inspection requirements. At the conclusion, a report is provided with details about compliance and, if applicable, reasons for noncompliance. Inspection labels are placed on each compliant door to provide greater confidence to code authorities that fire doors have been inspected and comply with NFPA 80 criteria.

For more information on UL's fire door inspection services please contact Wayne Cornwall in Toronto, Canada at Wayne.G.Cornwall@ul.com or at +1.416.757.3611.

UL Fire Alarm Certification Program (continued from cover)

Unfortunately many jurisdictions do not understand how the UL fire alarm certificate program can help provide confidence that existing fire alarm systems remain compliant with NFPA 72 requirements after initial system approval at no cost to the jurisdiction and at a modest cost to the alarm system owner. This article describes what fire authorities need to know about UL Listed central stations and the UL fire alarm certificate program so they can improve the reliability of fire alarm systems in their jurisdictions.

Codes require central stations to be listed.

The International Fire Code and Uniform Fire Code require fire alarm systems in specific applications to be monitored by an approved supervising station in accordance with NFPA 72. Fire code authorities often require these systems to be monitored by UL Listed central stations, which is consistent with NFPA 72, Section 26.3.3 requirements. However, merely requiring the fire alarms systems to be monitored by a listed central station does not mean the central station will provide all of the NFPA 72 required elements for central station service.

Full central station service includes more than just monitoring.

Central station service complying with NFPA 72, Section 26.3, includes all of the following elements:

- Proper installation of the alarm system and alarm transmitters

- Alarm, supervisory, and trouble signals that are monitored and responded to in a timely fashion

- Alarm signals that are retransmitted to local authorities with no delays, except as specifically allowed

- Alarm system record keeping and reporting as prescribed

- Periodic testing and maintenance of the system

- Prompt runners (technicians) dispatch to the protected premise, when required.

Do listed central stations provide full central station service for all of the systems they monitor?

No, there are no requirements for UL listed central station to provide full central station

Central station alarm companies can be Certified (Listed) as:

(1) Full service companies that provide all elements of service

(2) Monitoring companies that are recognized only for signal monitoring, retransmission, record keeping, and reporting, or

(3) Fire alarm service — local companies that provide installation, testing and maintenance for a protected area, and subcontracts the monitoring, retransmission, and associated record keeping and reporting to a listed central station.

service for all of the systems they monitor at their facility unless mandated by a local AHJ In many cases the contract between the alarm company and business owner only includes monitoring and reporting of signals from the premise fire alarm system. If the system becomes inoperative or begins to generate nuisance alarms, the owner needs to arrange for service and repair, which may or may not be requested in a timely manner. Unfortunately, many fire officials incorrectly assume that requiring a system to be monitored at a listed central station will automatically include full code required central station service to be provided.

What is covered by a UL central station listing?

When a customer seeks a central station listing, UL technical staff performs a comprehensive initial investigation to verify compliance with NFPA 72, and the UL 827 Standard for Central Station Alarm Systems. Companies that demonstrate compliance obtain a listing for providing central station service in a given area, and this is reflected in the UL Online Certifications Directory. In addition to the initial investigation, UL performs periodic audit inspections to verify ongoing compliance. These audit inspections verify:

- The central station building is properly constructed and secured

- Primary and standby power are provided, maintained and periodically tested

- Listed fire alarm receiving equipment, along with spare parts, are provided

- Sufficient staff is on duty at all times to handle alarm signal receipt and required responses

- Records of all fire alarm activity are maintained for certificated alarm systems (a key distinction)

- Staff demonstrates the ability to provide all elements of NFPA 72 central station service.

How can fire authorities assure full central station service is provided?

When an alarm service company issues a UL certificate on a central station fire alarm system it is their declaration that the system is in compliance with the edition of NFPA 72 stated on the UL certificate. Copies of the UL certificate can be provided to the local jurisdiction. NFPA 72, section 26.3.4.3, requires the document to be posted within three feet of the control unit. These systems are automatically covered by the UL audit program. In addition to the basic central station audit, UL technical staff will audit alarm company records to verify that required maintenance, testing and response is provided to the certificated systems. In

addition, a selected number of certificated systems will be audited to verify compliance with NFPA 72, as described on the certificate.

During the audit, records are reviewed to determine if the system is repaired in a timely manner, and if not, the AHJ is required to be notified when the system is going to be out of service for an extended time period. The independent UL audits are a cost effective way for jurisdictions to assure fire alarm systems in their jurisdiction are being periodically tested and serviced using an independent certification organization they trust.

Can fire authorities require UL certificates on central station systems?

Yes, this can be done by merely enforcing NFPA 72, Section 26.3.4.1, which requires documentation indicating code compliance of the premise alarm system to be issued by the organization that listed the station prime contractor—in other words, a UL Central Station Fire Alarm Certificate.

Unfortunately, many fire authorities are not aware of this requirement, or mistakenly believe that the UL certificate is part of the alarm system documentation package required by NFPA 72, Chapter 7.

Are UL certificates expensive?

No. The annual cost of a UL fire alarm certificate is $85 per system. There may be additional charges by the alarm company for providing full, code required NFPA 72 central station alarm service, especially compared to companies that provide monitoring service only, with no periodic testing and maintenance. However, with almost 800 UL listed central station service providers in North America, building owners seeking UL listed central station service usually have several companies to select from, with corresponding competitive rates.

Is it easy for a jurisdiction to begin requiring certificates?

Yes, in the jurisdictions that require UL certificates on all central station service systems, a few simple steps added to their plan review process was all that was needed to verify that a UL certificate is issued once the system is initially signed off. UL alarm auditors will be happy to work with the jurisdiction to verify that certificates are issued and maintained in force. In addition, when jurisdictions experience problems with UL certificated alarm systems, we will follow up on these concerns to make sure any discrepancies are corrected.

How can I find out more about this program?

For additional information on the UL fire alarm certification program and how it can benefit your department and the businesses within your community please contact Tom Presnak in Northbrook, IL at Thomas.E.Presnak@ul.com or at +1.847.664.2651.

Quick Facts on the Program

Almost 800 companies have UL central station listings

Approximately 25,000 fire alarm certificates are currently in force.

Many code authorities experience a reduction in unwanted alarms after requiring UL certification/central station service.

Listed central stations can be found in the Online Certifications Directory www.ul.com/database under the Central Station Protective Signaling Services category (UUFX).

UL will follow up on concerns with fire alarm systems monitored by a UL Listed central station **ONLY IF A UL CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED ON THE SYSTEM.**

Enhanced UL Marks coming your way soon

By Howard Hopper / *Regulatory Services Program Coordinator*

For years designers, architects and code authorities have relied on UL Listing Marks and UL Classification Marks to determine code compliance. These marks typically consisted of the UL logo, the word Listed or Classified, a product name or Classification information, and a control number.

Products in today's international environment must meet a diverse spectrum of certification and compliance requirements. In response to evolving customer needs, we have introduced an enhanced version of our Certification Marks that will eventually replace our traditional Listing and Classification Marks.

The enhanced mark utilizes a modular approach to illustrate the attributes of a product that UL has certified, and includes the manufacturer's file number that will make it easier to identify the applications for which the product is certified. An example of an enhanced mark is shown in the accompanying illustration, and details on the marking are included in product category guide information in the Online Certifications Directory.

All currently existing versions of UL's Listing and Classification Marks remain valid and should continue to be accepted as an indication of certification. UL expects the transition to the enhanced Mark to happen over time, so you may not see the enhanced marks in the immediate future, but they are coming. More information on this important development will be forthcoming shortly.

Regulatory Services Welcomes Jon Roberts

UL is proud to announce that Jon Roberts has recently joined the Regulatory Services department as a Lead Regulatory Engineer.

Prior to joining UL, Jon had a long history within the fire and life safety arena starting in the late 1980s as a firefighter in upstate New York. Most recently he worked at the Oklahoma State Fire Marshal's Office. Throughout his career Jon has been involved with many different aspects of fire and life safety. This includes not only fire suppression activities, but also the review of fire protection equipment, performing site inspections on construction projects and acting as a technical advisor to state fire chiefs, fire marshals, and building officials.

Jon holds a degree in Fire Protection and Safety Technology from Oklahoma State University as well as many International Code Council (ICC) certifications. He has also served as a member of ICC code development committees and code councils and has worked closely with the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) on training manuals including code enforcement and inspection.
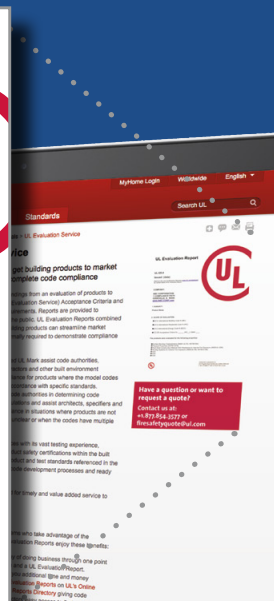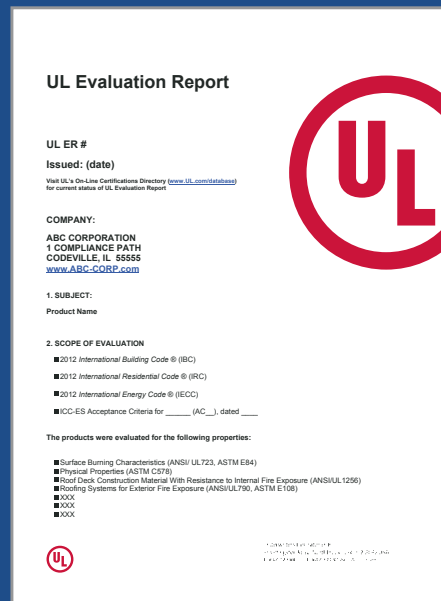
Jon's responsibilities will be to participate in code development and provide fire and building code outreach in the Southwest/Midwest U.S. regions. Please feel free to contact Jon in Oklahoma City, OK at Jonathan.Roberts@ul.com, or via phone at +1.405.208.1100.

UL Evaluation Reports Now Available Online

UL Evaluation Reports are now available online for the convenience of code users and enforcers at www.ul.com/erdirectory. Please feel free to bookmark this web page. The UL Evaluation Reports Directory is very intuitive and allows searches based on the following criteria:

- UL Evaluation Report number
- CSI division
- Related codes and Acceptance Criteria
- Company name
- Keywords

The number of UL Evaluation Reports continues to grow at a rapid pace and now includes roofing products, thermal insulation and many other categories. For more information on UL Evaluation Reports please visit the UL Evaluation Service web site.

UL LLC
333 Pfingsten Road, Northbrook, IL 60062-2096

Calendar of Events

August 13 – 17, 2013
IAFC Fire Rescue International
Chicago, IL
www.iafc.org

September 18 – 21 , 2013
NCSEA Annual Conference
Atlanta, GA
www.ncsea.com/

September 24 – 27 2013
CONSTRUCT by CSI
Nashville, TN
www.constructshow.org

September 29 – October 3, 2013
IAPMO Annual Education and
Business Conferece
Kansas City, MO
www.iapmo.org

If you would like *The Code Authority* to consider publishing your upcoming events, contact Howard Hopper by e-mail at Howard.D.Hopper@ul.com. Please type "TCA Calendar" in the subject line.

Scan with your mobile QR Code
Reader to find out more about
UL support for code authorities.