



RELMARK GROUP

Risk Management Advocates for Fire Sprinkler Contractors

The Importance of Pitch in Dry Pipe Systems

The number of claims involving dry systems is on the increase. Improper installation and maintenance is the main cause of losses.

A common cause of loss for dry systems is trapped water in piping. Either the trapped water freezes, resulting in cracked or broken pipes, or the water creates an oxygen-enriched environment for internal pipe corrosion and microbiologically induced corrosion (MIC). Preventing trapped water in dry systems is critical to controlling the frequency and severity of losses.

To help prevent dry pipe losses in your business, include the following practices into your company's standard procedures for design and installation of systems:

- Always pitch pipe per NFPA 13
- Supply installers with additional training on hanging of dry system pipe and the importance of proper pitching
- Create documented standard procedures for checking pitch on pipes
- Require use of proper levels which indicate slope
- Locate air compressors in a dry environment
- Make sure all low points have drains
- If moisture buildup is a concern consider an air dryer or use of compressed nitrogen
- Identify all low point drains with signs

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- Place a placard at the riser indicating the number and location of all low point drains
- Provide the building owner with a copy of NFPA 25, reinforce the need to maintain systems and document building owners understanding of their operation and maintenance responsibilities including draining low point drains

Added practices for service and/or inspection calls:

- If missing, loose or damaged hangers are noticed, check pipes for proper pitching
- Document all observations and corrective actions taken
- Properly set air pressure to avoid accidental tripping of dry pipe valve
- Repair air leaks in the piping system to keep the dry pipe valve from tripping if compressor power is lost
- Verify low point drains are being drained regularly
- Make sure any inspection or service contract clearly indicates the extent you are responsible in draining low points. Unless you plan to supply additional services, indicate that it is not the intent of the contract to drain low points throughout freezing season.

Proper design and installation is critical. Take the extra time to check and recheck pitching of dry systems. It can make all the difference!

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