
NEWS OF VALUE

CHECK YOUR BUILDINGS FOR POTENTIALLY FAULTY OMEGA SPRINKLER HEADS

Morgan & Cheves, Inc., would like to call your attention to potentially faulty fire sprinklers that could be in your buildings. Omega model sprinklers manufactured between 1983 and 1996 by Central Sprinkler Company have failed in actual fires. In addition, randomly sampled Omega model sprinklers have experienced high failure rates: 31 percent in Underwriters Laboratories (the sprinkler approval agency) tests and 35 percent in tests conducted for the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. The rubber O-ring in the Omega model sprinklers is thought to be the problem. Central Sprinkler switched from rubber to silicone O-rings in June 1996, but millions of the rubber-ring Omegas remain in place throughout the country.

What Should I Do?

You should check to see if Omega model sprinklers are installed as part of the sprinkler system in your facilities. Omega model sprinklers are stamped or inscribed with the name CENTRAL, the Omega model number, and the year manufactured. Check for this information located on sprinklers within spare sprinkler boxes located near sprinkler system risers. The sprinkler make and model is often provided on sprinkler system drawings or blueprints. You can also contact the sprinkler contractor who installed your sprinkler system to see if the Omega sprinklers were used.

If Omega model sprinklers are found in your facility, a representative sampling of the sprinklers must be tested for reliability. Central Sprinkler Company is requiring that NFPA 25 (the National Fire Protection Association's *Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems*) be followed for the random selection of sprinklers. Per NFPA 25, a representative sample consists of a minimum of two sprinklers per floor or riser but no less than four or one percent of the total, whichever is greater. Central is recommending at least a two percent sample.

Who Should Test The Samples?

Underwriters Laboratories has established a toll-free number (800-758-1794) to help homeowners, property owners, and building managers arrange for samples of Omega sprinklers to be sent to UL for testing and to provide related information on UL's on-going investigation of Omega sprinklers. Callers can speak directly with UL representatives Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Central time. Sprinkler samples can also be submitted to Central Sprinkler Company for testing by calling the manufacturer toll-free at 800-523-6512. Central will perform testing at their expense if customers supply them with sample sprinklers to be tested.

A specific protocol must be followed to ship the samples. DO NOT attempt to remove sprinkler heads from sprinkler systems yourself. Contact your sprinkler contractor or Bryan Raughley of The PMA Group (410-527-9057) if you find suspect Omega sprinklers.

Where Can I Go For More Information?

Below are three sources for more information:
Central Sprinkler Company customer service: 800-523-6512, www.centralsprinkler.com
Underwriters Laboratories: 800-758-1794, www.ul.com
Consumer Product Safety Commission: 800-638-2772, www.cpsc.gov

Questions Or Concerns?

If you need some answers, please call Steve Dickerson at Morgan & Cheves, Inc. (703-739-2346).

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