



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

W. G. Shelton, Jr., CEM  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Virginia Department of Fire Programs

October 14, 2009

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#### MEMORANDUM

TO: Fire and Building Officials

FROM: Ed Altizer, State Fire Marshal  
*Charles E. Altizer*

SUBJECT: Reliable Model G-3 Fire Sprinkler Problem

The State Fire Marshal's Office has reviewed the U.L. testing reports of sample heads taken from buildings where the Reliable G-3 dry sprinkler heads have been installed, and where they are believed to have not activated in fires, as well as other locations. Of the 183 heads tested, 175 of them failed the test. Based on these results and in accordance with 901.6 and 901.10 of the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) the SFMO has determined that these heads are not in compliance with the State's Building and Fire Codes.

The first report of a potential problem came from a fire in Frederick County. Since then, three fires have occurred where the G-3 heads were found in Fairfax County. Fairfax County has taken the lead in getting the heads tested. The Consumer Product Safety Commission was contacted about the problem, but at this point, we have been unsuccessful in convincing them that a recall is warranted.

These heads are found in apartments and condominiums, typically on balconies. They are also found in freezers, loading docks and attics in many other types of buildings in areas subject to freezing. This type of head is typically connected to a wet sprinkler system and consists of a sprinkler connected to a pipe containing compressed gas.

We asked all state agencies to review their sprinkler inventories to determine if they have these heads. When they were found, we asked agencies to develop plans to replace the heads. We now will be requiring state agencies to replace them pursuant to Section 901.6 and 901.10.

In accordance with Section 901.6 and 901.10, we have determined these sprinklers no longer comply with the requirements of the state's building and fire codes and must be replaced. When discovered during inspections of buildings in those areas without local enforcement of the SFPC, the SFMO will issue a notice of violation requiring correction of the deficiency. With your help, we are trying to notify as many client groups, trade associations, and building owners, so that they can take steps to survey their buildings and have the heads replaced. We will provide educational and informational press releases where appropriate, and provide you or client groups with assistance in delivering the message. As we find them during our inspections, we will require replacement.

If you wish copies of the data we used to make this decision or if we may be of assistance to you in your application and enforcement, please let us know. For information, you may call Ron Reynolds, SFMO Chief Deputy, at 804-612-7268 or email at [ron.reynolds@vdfp.virginia.gov](mailto:ron.reynolds@vdfp.virginia.gov). Information will be placed on the Virginia Department of Fire Programs website at [www.vafire.com](http://www.vafire.com).