

"A Big Win for Industry and FM Approvals' Customers"

California revises fire prevention and suppression procedures requiring certification/approval of welding blankets to ANSI/FM 4950 standard

The state of California, USA, has updated its fire prevention and suppression procedures and methods requirements to incorporate the 2009 edition of the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA 51B, *Standard for Fire Prevention During Welding, Cutting and Other Hot Work*. As a result, ANSI/FM 4950, *American National Standard for Evaluating Welding Pads, Welding Blankets and Welding Curtains for Hot Work Operations*, which is embedded into NFPA 51B, has now become the standard requirement for listed and/or FM Approved welding blankets, pads and curtains in California.

NFPA 51B and FM Global's Data Sheet 10-3, *Hot Work Management*, are widely recognized as the most comprehensive hot work guidelines; in 2007, NFPA 51B incorporated ANSI/FM 4950 into its 2009 edition. Prior to that, NFPA 51B recommended only heat-resistant tarpaulins, which allowed fabrics made of untested, non-rated materials to be used for fire protection.

Tom McCarty, senior engineering specialist at FM Approvals and standards coordinator at the time, was critical to the development of ANSI/FM 4950 and its incorporation into NFPA 51B. "It was my

job to educate all stakeholders and work to get our product testing standards adopted by codes and enforced by jurisdictions. We knew we had developed a realistic and rigorous test for products used in the prevention of hot work losses, and we incorporated those tests into Approval Standard 4950."

In order for Approval Standard 4950 to be considered for adoption by a code body like NFPA, the document first had to be submitted through the ANSI consensus process. "Once Approval Standard 4950 became the ANSI/FM 4950, it could be used by the code as a referenced requirement, in this case, for products used in hot work operations," explains McCarty. "Prior to adoption of ANSI/FM 4950 into NFPA 51B, the requirement for welding pads, blankets and curtains was rather weak. The code required these products to be non-combustible, yet, there was no test to assure they could withstand the hazards associated with hot work and welding processes."

Mark Blank, chief engineering technical specialist from FM Global's Chicago operations, was a member of the NFPA 51B development committee and saw the opportunity. "The committee was very willing to

adopt ANSI/FM 4950 into their code language," says Blank.

But a code is only enforceable when it has been adopted by a jurisdiction. "The adoption of NFPA 51B in California means that trained and knowledgeable jurisdictional inspectors in the state will be looking for ANSI/FM Approved welding blankets to be used during hot work operations at locations in their jurisdiction," says McCarty. "And, they can enforce that use under the law of that state."

"This is a big win for our customers and for the industry," adds George Smith, director, FM Approvals materials group. "California is a state with a lot of influence. I see many more states across the country following its lead. This will mean an increased demand for FM Approved welding products, which translates into a safer work environment."

McCarty pointed out that ANSI/FM 4950 has also been adopted in Canada as an enforceable ORD (Other Recognized Document) by the Standards Council of Canada.



Paris Stavrianidis Re-appointed to ANSI Board

Paris Stavrianidis, vice president and manager, FM Approvals, has been appointed for a second term as director-at-large to the board of directors for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), a professional health and safety standards organization, representing the interests of more than 125,000 companies and 3.5 million professionals worldwide.