State Fire Marshal's Notice

August 2016

Fire Protection Sprinkler Systems, SCR-U & RME-U

It has come to the attention of the State Fire Marshal's Office that there continues to be questions regarding design and installation of the underground portion of fire protection sprinkler systems. The following is offered as clarification and as a reminder of the importance to remain in complete compliance with all provisions, rules, regulations and/or statutes enacted to govern fire protection sprinkler systems in Texas.

Q1: At what point does the underground fire main start?

A: The fire sprinkler rules define it as the point of connection or valve where the primary purpose of the water is for a fire protection sprinkler system. TAC §34.706

Q2: Is it acceptable for the registered fire sprinkler firm to use an unregistered subcontractor (no SCR) to excavate and backfill a trench containing the underground fire main piping and valves?

A: Yes. It does not require a registration or license through the SFMO to dig the trench and fill it.

Q3: Is a fire license required to install a backflow prevention assembly on an underground fire main?

A: Yes. The backflow prevention assembly is considered a part of the underground fire main and must be installed by a registered fire protection sprinkler firm (holding a SCR-G or U).

Q4: Is a license required from the SFMO to install private fire hydrants and associated piping?

A: No – as long as the hydrants are not on a fire sprinkler supply line. Always check with the authority having jurisdiction regarding any requirements for utility contractors.

Q5: A registered SCR-U utility contractor holds the main contract for the underground fire hydrant line and fire lead in line with the GC/Owner and digs the ditch and lays the pipe. Can they design and stamp their own plans? Can they hire a SCR-G firm to design and stamp the plans? Is the SCR-G firm obligated to supervise under this scenario?

A1: A registered firm with an SCR-U / RME-U cannot design the underground for a fire protection sprinkler system. By definition, the RME-U is authorized to install, maintain, and service the underground fire main, but not plan it. They could hire a registered SCR-G/RME-G firm or professional engineer to design/stamp the plans.

A2: Each registered firm is responsible for the portion of the work it does.

Q6: If we (registered SCR-G firm) hold the main contract with the GC/Owner for the fire hydrant line and the fire lead in line and we do design/supervise/test/stamp, etc., may we hire (subcontract) a non SCR-U utility contactor, to dig the ditch and lay pipe for the fire hydrant line? To dig the ditch and lay the pipe for the fire lead in line?

A1: The water main/fire hydrant line does not fall under the scope of the Fire Sprinkler Statute and Rules, so registration as SCR-G or SCR-U is not required. Always check with the local authority for their requirements related to the pipe and installation of the water main/fire hydrant line.

A2: The contractor installing the pipe for the supply to the fire protection sprinkler system must be registered through the SFMO (hold a SCR-G or SCR-U).

A3: A registered firm may not subcontract with an unregistered firm to allow the unregistered firm as an independent contractor to perform any act of a fire protection sprinkler contractor. 28TAC §34.710.(a)

Q7: Does the RME-U or G have to be on site at all times during the installation of the fire protection sprinkler system - underground or aboveground?

A: No. There is nothing in the fire sprinkler statute or rules that specifically requires the RME to be on site at all times when the installation is being performed. The RME is responsible to ensure that work is performed properly and must go to the site and approve the installation, affix material and test certificates. Always check with the local AHJ to see if they have any additional requirements, such as the RME being present for final acceptance testing with the AHJ.

Q8: Is the RME required to be present for acceptance testing with the local FM?

A: The fire sprinkler statute and rules do not require an RME to be present for acceptance testing with the AHJ. There may be local policies in place, however, requiring the RME to be present. When working in a new jurisdiction, always check in advance with the AHJ to become familiar with any requirements they may have. The RME must affix material and test certificates to the system upon completion, but this is not required by the statute or rules to be done at the time of the AHJ acceptance testing.