Computer and Record Storage Fire Protection

A listed Fire Extinguishing System should be provided to protect computer rooms and record storage facilities.

Selection of an appropriate system should consider system effectiveness, availability, and requirements of the protected facility.

Halon

Halon is extremely effective for computer fire suppression. Fast fire knock-down, ability to penetrate cabinets, relative safety and cleanliness are factors that have historically made Halon the best choice from an extinguishing standpoint. Unfortunately, Halons have been linked to depletion of the earth's protective ozone layer. This environmental concern has caused doubt as to the future availability of Halon protection. Legislation has placed a limit on Halon production and a total ban on production/use has been proposed.

Existing halon protection

Existing Halon Systems and Extinguishers continue to provide excellent protection. These should be kept in service until conditions dictate otherwise.

Selection of new protection

In light of the uncertain availability of Halon in the future, decision making with respect to new protection installation should also consider alternative types of protection alone or in combination.

Acceptable Alternative Protection includes: Automatic Sprinklers, Carbon Dioxide, Dry Chemical, and Foam Systems.

The characteristics of each type of extinguishing system and requirements of each protected location must be evaluated to arrive at the best choice of protection.

Automatic sprinklers

Automatic sprinkler protection for computer rooms and record storage areas are often the most practical means of protection. Water damage to electronic equipment is not as serious as originally contemplated. The solid state circuitry in the new computers prevents serious water damage. Sprinkler protection for under floor spaces is generally not feasible because of the limited clearances for developing effective water spray patterns.

Automatic total flooding carbon dioxide systems are recommended for under floor spaces.

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Automatic smoke detectors

Regardless of the extinguishing system provided, listed smoke detectors should be installed throughout the computer room, in underfloor spaces, in records storage rooms, and in the main supply duct of air handling systems. Actuation of any detectors should result in the sounding of alarms, activating the automatic extinguishing systems and the shut down of the air handling system unless the equipment is arranged to remove smoke to the outside atmosphere.

Hand extinguishers

Choice of manually applied protection should also be evaluated. Acceptable protection includes Halon 1211, CO2 and multipurpose dry chemical. 10 pound extinguishers should be available in sufficient numbers to handle electrical or "Class C" type fires. 21/2 gallon pressurized clear-water extinguishers should also be available for paper or "Class A" type fires. The extinguishers should be located so that at least one of each type is within 50 feet travel distance from any point in the room.

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