

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-04-08

February 20, 2008

The following is offered in response to your February 20, 2008 request for a formal interpretation of the provisions of Sections 8.2.1.3 and 8.2.5 of the 2002 Edition of NFPA 13D as referenced by the 2003 International Building Code portion of the 2005 State Building Code.

Question: Assuming that no thermal membrane is required to protect the piping, does the referenced standard permit the installation of pendant sprinkler heads in unfinished basements with an open floor joist ceiling even though the individual sprinkler head used is listed to be installed with a finished ceiling?

Answer: Yes. Information received from Timothy Hawthorne of NFPA and Roland Huggins, PE of AFSA indicates that the specific language of Section 8.2.5 takes precedence over the general language of Section 8.2.1.2. Section 8.2.1.2 requires sprinkler heads to be positioned in accordance with the head's listing. Section 8.2.5 specifically permits the installation of basement sprinkler heads in a manner that anticipates future installation of a finished ceiling as long as metallic pipe is used or the ceiling is not required for thermal protection of the pipe. While it appears that the two sections contradict each other in the case of a sprinkler head that is listed to be located at a finished ceiling, the two gentlemen previously mentioned agree that it is the intent of the standard that the language of 8.2.5 prevails over the language of 8.2.1.2, allowing sprinkler heads in a 13D system to be installed in an unfinished basement providing the ceiling membrane isn't required as thermal protection for the piping. Naturally, my interpretation assumes that the ceiling membrane isn't required as part of a rated floor/ceiling assembly or for construction classification purposes.