I Wish I'd Known Sooner: 30 Years of Lessons Learned

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Question: What would you change if you could go back?

- What's something you would do sooner?
- Would you change the path you took to get to where you are?
- Who do you owe your biggest acknowledgement to?
  - Have you shown that appreciation?
- Do you feel a responsibility to help advance and develop your successors?

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7 Lessons I've Learned and the Impact They Had.

- Lesson 1: Failure to Recognize I Was Already Building a Career.
- Lesson 2: Fear and Comfort Prevent Advancement.
- Lesson 3: Working with Family and Friends Rarely Ends Well.
- Lesson 4: Being Uncompromising Requires Compromise.
- Lesson 5: Failure to Embrace or Consider New Technology and Ideas.
- Lesson 6: The Price and Value of Loyalty.
- Lesson 7 (Expert Level): Finding Balance.

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Lesson 1: Failure to Recognize I Was Already Building a Career.

- Money/compensation often outweighs all other things.
- Am I on the right seat of the right bus going to the right destination?
- Identifying those who can, and are willing to help you grow. Heeding their advice. Following their footsteps.
- Investing in your future is up to you.
- Newton's Law
- Career Dividend Analysis

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Lesson 1 (Cont.): The Career Dividend Analysis

- **Exposure** – Who will see your work? **(E):** 0–10
- **Work Quality** – Can you produce a quality deliverable? **(Q):** 0–10
- **Networking** - Will you be working with others? **(N):** 0–10
- **Enjoyment** – Do you enjoy the task or work? **(J):** 0–10
- Score each variable on a **0–10 scale**.
- Career Dividend $= 100\left(\frac{E}{10}\times\frac{Q}{10}\times\frac{N}{10}\times\frac{J}{10}\right)$

Examples:
Industry Conferences
Committee Participation
Certifications
Volunteering
Mentoring
Additional Education

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Career Dividend $= 100\left(\frac{E}{10}\times\frac{Q}{10}\times\frac{N}{10}\times\frac{J}{10}\right)$

- Sample: Like the people, hate the job…
- $100\left(\frac{10}{10}\times\frac{5}{10}\times\frac{10}{10}\times\frac{3}{10}\right)$
- Dividend = 15!

- Sample: Love the work and the people, but nobody sees it…
- $100\left(\frac{3}{10}\times\frac{10}{10}\times\frac{10}{10}\times\frac{10}{10}\right)$
- Dividend = 30!

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Career Dividend $= 100\left(\frac{E}{10}\times\frac{Q}{10}\times\frac{N}{10}\times\frac{J}{10}\right)$

- Sample: Like the people, like the job…
- $100\left(\frac{9}{10}\times\frac{9}{10}\times\frac{8}{10}\times\frac{10}{10}\right)$
- Dividend = 65!

High Dividend Activities:
Technical Education
Committee Work
Certifications such as NICET.

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Lesson 2: Fear and Comfort Prevent Advancement.

- Fear of failure or uncertainty.
- Analysis paralysis.
- They pay me really well and I have 4 weeks of PTO...
- I have a really big bonus coming in a few months.
- I'll wait for him to retire and that job should be mine.
- I work from home. Does it get any easier…?

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Lesson 3: Working with Family and Friends Rarely Ends Well.

- Gucci, Ducati, Land's End.
- Family or friends can create the foundation of a great company—but systems, communication, and accountability are what allow it to survive.
- Working with friends. Been there, done that.
- July 27th, 2021.

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Lesson 4: Being Uncompromising Requires Compromise.

- If you want something done right…
- No, your way is dumb, do it my way.
- No thanks, I don't want that promotion. Its in another state.
- When teammates are also uncompromising…
- You have to take time away from something else…
- "Why am I working for this guy? I'm going to find another job…"
- Family and location were more important than a promotion.
- HR Nightmare? Yes, but lack of defined leadership.

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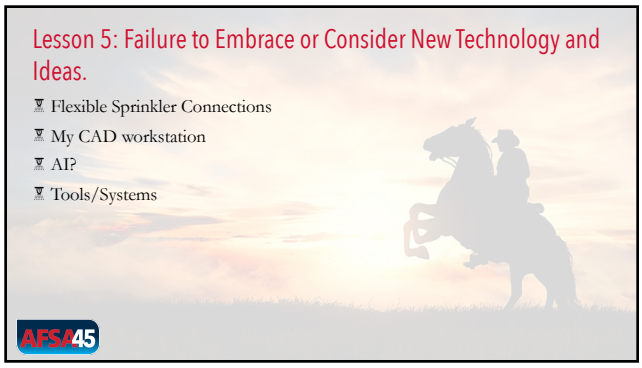
Lesson 5: Failure to Embrace or Consider New Technology and Ideas.
Flexible Sprinkler Connections
My CAD workstation
AI?
Tools/Systems
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Lesson 6: The Price and Value of Loyalty
Price vs Value
Undervalued Loyalty = Career Path Slowed
For You and the Employer
If loyalty isn't equally given and received, you do not have a career, you have a job.
Loyalty to Colleagues, Mentors and Mentees
The key to surviving and thriving.
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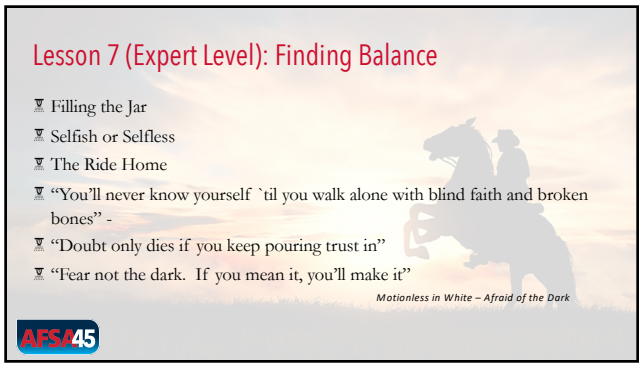
Lesson 7 (Expert Level): Finding Balance
Filling the Jar
Selfish or Selfless
The Ride Home
"You'll never know yourself `til you walk alone with blind faith and broken bones" -
"Doubt only dies if you keep pouring trust in"
"Fear not the dark. If you mean it, you'll make it"
Motionless in White – Afraid of the Dark
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✓ Badge scanned at start of seminar
✓ Attend full seminar
✓ Complete evaluation 1 of 2 ways:
✓ Evaluation link is emailed to attendees with scanned badges
✓ Event App by EventsAir
Login to app (using your email & 6-character app pin)
Only attendees who were scanned in will have evaluation access at end of session.
Thank you!
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Scan QR code to submit questions for Ask the Experts!

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2027 Training Schedule

WEBINARS

1/6	Updates to NFPA 20
1/20	Calculating Pressure Reducing Hose Valves
2/3	Consumer Alert: Nitrogen in Sprinkler Systems
2/17	Reviewing Hydraulic Calculations
3/3	Updates to NFPA 13, 2028 Ed.
3/17	Updates to NFPA 13R & 13D, 2028 Eds.
4/7	Topic Coming Soon
4/21	NFPA 25: Roles & Responsibilities
5/5	Standpipe Flow Test Procedures
5/19	Storage 101
6/2	NFPA Technical Meeting - Voting Guide
6/16	Topic Coming Soon
6/30	Topic Coming Soon
7/7	Updates to NFPA 14, 2027 Edition
7/21	Adjacent Hazards & Design Methods
8/4	Acceptance Testing
8/18	Modifications to Existing Systems
9/22	Topic Coming Soon
10/6	Seismic 101
10/20	Proposed Updates to NFPA 25, 2029 Ed.
11/3	Evaluating Fire Pump Flow Tests
11/17	Top 10 Tech Reviews
12/1	Designing Water Storage Tanks
12/15	Pump Room Layout

PROGRAMS

Feb 9 - Mar 5 Apr 20 - May 14 Aug 3 - Aug 27** Oct 26 - Nov 19	Beginning Design School*
Apr 26 - May 7 Nov 1 - 12	Intermediate Design School*
Feb 8 - 10** Apr 12 - 14 Jul 12 - 14 Oct 11 - 13	Sprinkler Hydraulics Calculations Workshop
Apr 19 - 21 Oct 18 - 20	Advanced Hydraulics Calculations Workshop
Feb 11** Apr 30 Jul 23 Sep 24	Introduction to the Fire Sprinkler Industry
Mar 1 - 3 May 17 - 19 Aug 16 - 18 Oct 18 - 20**	NFPA 25 Essentials Workshop
Jun 7 - 10 Sep 20 - 23	Experienced Inspector Skills Lab
Mar 4 - 5 May 20 - 21 Aug 19 - 20 Oct 21 - 22**	NFPA 25 Fire Pump Workshop
Spring Summer Fall	ITM Inspector Development Program* *This program is 20 months.*

** Hybrid course **At General Air Products Lab, Exton, PA*

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September 8-11	Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, CA

For More Details Visit:
firesprinkler.org

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Dates subject to change. Programs subject to minimum registrations.

rev 9/14/2026

Virtual Instruction Path (VIP)

for Sprinkler Fitting Apprentices

Level 1 - Begins January 2027

Level 2 - Begins February 2027

Level 3 - Begins January 2027

Level 4 - Begins March 2027

www.firesprinkler.org/VIP

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HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS FOR 2027

FEATURING AFSA'S TRAINING LAB

NFPA 25 Essentials Workshop

Mar | May | Aug | Oct

Description: Understand roles, responsibilities, and NFPA 25 ITM procedures through hands-on testing of wet systems, dry systems, and fire pumps.

NFPA 25 Fire Pump Workshop

Mar | May | Aug | Oct

Description: Develop practical NFPA 25 fire pump ITM skills, including no-flow and full-flow testing, water supply graphing, and performance evaluation.

Introduction to the Fire Sprinkler Industry

Feb | Apr | Jul | Sep

Description: This course is designed for those new to the industry. An introductory, wide-ranging 8-hour course that provides a broad overview of core fire sprinkler industry concepts for those new to the field.

Experienced Inspector Skills Lab NEW

Mar | Sep

Description: Take your ITM expertise beyond the basics. Designed for experienced technicians, this course combines focused classroom instruction with hands-on system lab training to strengthen your application of current NFPA 25 inspection, testing, and maintenance requirements. Refine fire sprinkler testing practices, improve documentation, deliver more consistent service, and help reduce liability while reinforcing knowledge commonly covered on certification exams.

Learn more about AFSA's fire sprinkler lab featuring functional risers, a spray room, fire pumps, and an interactive classroom.

firesprinkler.org/lab