

NFPA 214

Standard on Water-Cooling Towers

2000 Edition



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An International Codes and Standards Organization

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NFPA 214

Standard on

Water-Cooling Towers

2000 Edition

This edition of NFPA 214, *Standard on Water-Cooling Towers*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Water-Cooling Towers and acted on by the National Fire Protection Association, Inc., at its World Fire Safety Congress and Exposition™ held May 14–17, 2000, in Denver, CO. It was issued by the Standards Council on July 20, 2000, with an effective date of August 18, 2000, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 214 was approved as an American National Standard on August 18, 2000.

Origin and Development of NFPA 214

The subject of the protection of water-cooling towers was first considered by the NFPA Committee on Building Construction in 1957, and a progress report on that subject was published in the Advance Reports of that year. In 1958, a new Committee on Water-Cooling Towers was appointed and a Tentative Standard on Fire Protection of Water-Cooling Towers proposed by the Committee was adopted by the Association in that year. Final adoption was secured in 1959. Revised editions were published in 1961, 1966, 1968, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1983, 1988, and 1992. The 1996 edition of the standard reinforced a performance-based approach to fire protection for water-cooling towers. The scope was also changed to include protection of field-erected water-cooling towers.

The changes in the 2000 edition reflect the new *Manual of Style*. There were no technical changes made in this edition.

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NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on the design, construction, protection, and maintenance of water-cooling towers.

Contents

Chapter 1 General	214- 4	4.4 Interlock.....	214- 7
1.1 Scope.....	214- 4	4.5 Vibration-Controlled Switch	214- 7
1.2 Definitions	214- 4		
Chapter 2 Location of Cooling Towers	214- 4	Chapter 5 Internal Combustion Engine-Driven Fans	214- 7
2.1 Combustible Exterior Surfaces.....	214- 4	5.1 Internal Combustion Engines	214- 7
2.2 Combustible Surfaces with Fixed Protection	214- 5	Chapter 6 Maintenance	214- 8
2.3 Noncombustible Exterior Surfaces	214- 5	6.1 Housekeeping	214- 8
2.4 Noncombustible Surfaces with Fixed Protection	214- 5	6.2 Smoking.....	214- 8
2.5 Combustible Towers on Building Roofs	214- 5	6.3 Mechanical Inspection	214- 8
2.6 Screening.....	214- 5	6.4 Inspection Frequency	214- 8
Chapter 3 Fire Protection	214- 5	6.5 Welding and Cutting.....	214- 8
3.1 General.....	214- 5	6.6 Down Time	214- 8
3.2 Fire Protection System Design	214- 5	6.7 Access	214- 8
3.3 Corrosion Protection.....	214- 7	6.8 Lockout	214- 8
3.4 Hydrant Protection	214- 7	6.9 Temporary Supports	214- 8
3.5 Standpipe Protection	214- 7	6.10 Maintenance of Fire Protection Systems ...	214- 8
3.6 Water Supply	214- 7	Chapter 7 Referenced Publications	214- 8
3.7 Lightning Protection.....	214- 7	Appendix A Explanatory Material	214- 8
3.8 Earthquake Protection	214- 7	Appendix B Water-Cooling Tower Types	214-16
Chapter 4 Electrical Equipment and Wiring	214- 7	Appendix C Referenced Publications	214-18
4.1 Installation.....	214- 7	Index	214-19
4.2 Overcurrent Protection.....	214- 7		
4.3 Stop Fan.....	214- 7		

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NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates that explanatory material on the paragraph can be found in Appendix A.

Information on referenced publications can be found in Chapter 7 and Appendix C.

Chapter 1 General

1.1* Scope.

1.1.1* This standard applies to fire protection for field-erected and factory-assembled water-cooling towers of combustible construction or those in which the fill is of combustible material.

1.1.2* Fire Risk Analysis. The following are some of the factors that shall be considered in determining the extent and method of fire protection required for induced-draft and natural-draft cooling towers:

- (1) Importance to continuity of operation
- (2)* Size and construction of tower
- (3) Type of tower
- (4) Location of tower
- (5) Water supply
- (6) Value of tower
- (7) Climate
- (8)* Water delivery time
- (9) Environment
- (10) Rooftop towers
- (11) Limited access
- (12) Construction of materials (*See 1.1.3.*)

1.1.3 Construction Materials of Cooling Towers. When the cooling towers' structure, fan and distribution decks, louvers, and fill materials are all of noncombustible materials, no fire protection is required. If any of these are combustible materials and the factors in 1.1.2 necessitate it, fire protection shall be provided in accordance with Chapter 3 and towers shall be located in accordance with Chapter 2. All other chapters shall be considered mandatory requirements.

1.2 Definitions.

1.2.1 Air Travel. The horizontal distance through the fill measured just below the distribution basin.

1.2.2* Approved. Acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

1.2.3* Authority Having Jurisdiction. The organization, office, or individual responsible for approving equipment, materials, an installation, or a procedure.

1.2.4* Cell. The smallest tower subdivision that can function as an independent unit with regard to air and water flow.

1.2.5 Combustible. Material other than noncombustible material.

1.2.6* Cooling Tower.

1.2.6.1* Counterflow. A cooling tower classification in which the water flows countercurrent to the airflow.

1.2.6.2* Crossflow. A cooling tower classification in which the airflow is essentially perpendicular to the flow of water.

1.2.6.3* Mechanical-Draft. A cooling tower classification in which air movement depends on fans or blowers.

1.2.6.4* Natural-Draft. A cooling tower classification in which air movement depends on the difference in densities of the heated air inside the tower and the cooler air outside. Natural-draft towers contain no fans or blowers.

1.2.7 Film Fill. Water-cooling media made of formed plastic sheets and placed parallel to tower air travel at evenly spaced intervals.

1.2.8* Fire-Resistant Partition. A tight, continuous partition suitable for use in a cooling tower environment having a fire-resistance rating of 20 minutes or more when tested in accordance with NFPA 251, *Standard Methods of Tests of Fire Endurance of Building Construction and Materials*. The partition shall extend from 1 ft below the operating water level of the cold water basin to the underside of the fan deck (counterflow towers) or distribution basin (crossflow towers).

1.2.9 Labeled. Equipment or materials to which has been attached a label, symbol, or other identifying mark of an organization that is acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction and concerned with product evaluation, that maintains periodic inspection of production of labeled equipment or materials, and by whose labeling the manufacturer indicates compliance with appropriate standards or performance in a specified manner.

1.2.10* Listed. Equipment, materials, or services included in a list published by an organization that is acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction and concerned with evaluation of products or services, that maintains periodic inspection of production of listed equipment or materials or periodic evaluation of services, and whose listing states that either the equipment, material, or service meets appropriate designated standards or has been tested and found suitable for a specified purpose.

1.2.11 Noncombustible. A material that, in the form in which it is used and under the conditions anticipated, will not ignite, burn, support combustion, or release flammable vapors when subjected to fire or heat. Examples of noncombustible materials are concrete, masonry, tile, and metal.

1.2.12 Shall. Indicates a mandatory requirement.

1.2.13 Should. Indicates a recommendation or that which is advised but not required.

Chapter 2 Location of Cooling Towers

2.1 Combustible Exterior Surfaces. Cooling towers with combustible exterior surfaces, including the deck, distribution basins, and so on, shall be located at least 100 ft (30.5 m) from the following hazards:

- (1) Structures or processes that emit sparks or flying brands under ordinary circumstances, such as chimneys, incinerators, flare stacks, or cob burners
- (2) Materials or processes of severe fire hazard, such as petroleum-processing and storage tanks, explosives manufacturing or storage, and petroleum product pipelines and pumping stations

2.2 Combustible Surfaces with Fixed Protection. Towers with combustible exterior surfaces and provided with fixed exposure protection in accordance with 3.2.10 shall be permitted to be located closer than 100 ft (30.5 m) from the hazards listed in Section 2.1(1) and (2).

2.3 Noncombustible Exterior Surfaces. Towers with noncombustible exterior surfaces shall be located 40 ft (12.2 m) or more from the hazards listed in Section 2.1(1) and (2).

2.4 Noncombustible Surfaces with Fixed Protection. Towers with noncombustible exterior surfaces and provided with fixed interior fire protection installed in accordance with Chapter 3 shall be permitted to be located closer than 40 ft (12.2 m) from the hazards listed in Section 2.1(1) and (2).

2.5 Combustible Towers on Building Roofs. Combustible cooling towers located on building roofs or other locations to which access for manual fire fighting is restricted or difficult shall be provided with a protection system in accordance with Chapter 3.

2.6 Screening. Open areas or space between a combustible cold-water basin and the ground or roof of a building upon which it is located shall be effectively screened to prevent the accumulation of waste combustible material under the tower, and to prevent the use of such areas or space under the tower for the storage of combustible material. Fire protection shall be permitted to be installed in lieu of screening.

Chapter 3 Fire Protection

3.1 General.

3.1.1* Types of Suppression Systems. If the fire risk analysis in 1.1.2 requires a fire protection system, one of the following general types of systems shall be used:

- (1) Open-head deluge system
- (2) Closed-head dry-pipe system
- (3) Wet-pipe automatic sprinkler system
- (4) Closed-head preaction system

3.1.2 Complete Plans and Data Required. A complete plan showing piping arrangement, location of sprinklers, fixed detectors, and operating equipment such as valves and deluge valves, together with hydraulic calculations, water requirements, and water supply information, shall be submitted to the authority having jurisdiction for approval before installation. Plans shall be drawn to scale and shall include the details necessary to indicate clearly all of the equipment and its arrangement. Plans shall show location of new work with relation to existing structures, cooling towers, and water supplies. Plans shall include a note listing the types of materials used in the system.

3.2 Fire Protection System Design.

3.2.1 Sprinkler and Water Spray. Fire protection systems shall be designed, installed, and tested in accordance with NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*, and NFPA 15, *Standard for Water Spray Fixed Systems for Fire Protection*, except as modified by this standard.

3.2.2 Types of Systems.

3.2.2.1* Because the counterflow tower design lends itself to either closed- or open-head systems, wet-pipe, dry-pipe, preaction, or deluge systems shall be permitted to be used.

3.2.2.2* The open-head deluge system shall be used in crossflow towers to maximize the water distribution and heat detection activation.

3.2.3 Minimum Rate of Application.

3.2.3.1 Under the fan decks of counterflow towers, the rate of application of water shall be 0.5 gpm/ft² (20.4 L/min·m²) (including fan opening).

3.2.3.2 Under the fan decks of crossflow towers, the rate of application of water shall be 0.33 gpm/ft² (13.45 L/min·m²) (including fan opening).

3.2.3.3 Over the fill areas of crossflow towers, the rate of application of water shall be 0.5 gpm/ft² (20.4 L/min·m²).

3.2.4 Types and Locations of Discharge Outlets.

3.2.4.1* Counterflow Towers.

3.2.4.1.1 The discharge outlets shall be located under the fan deck and fan opening.

3.2.4.1.2 Except under the fan opening, all discharge outlets shall have deflector distances installed in accordance with NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*.

3.2.4.1.3 Closed-head discharge outlets for dry-pipe and preaction systems shall be installed in the upright position only.

3.2.4.2* Crossflow Towers.

3.2.4.2.1 The discharge outlets protecting the plenum area shall be located under the fan deck and in the fan opening.

3.2.4.2.2 Discharge outlets protecting the fill shall be located under the distribution basin on either the louver or drift eliminator side, discharging horizontally through the joist channels.

3.2.4.2.3 Towers with a fill area longer than the maximum allowable for the discharge device being used shall have discharge devices placed on both sides of the fill area in each joist channel. The pressure at each discharge device shall be adequate to provide protection for half of the length of the fill area.

3.2.4.2.4 Where joist channels are wider than 2 ft (0.6 m), more than one discharge device shall be required per joist channel.

Exception: If the discharge device being used is listed for the width of the joist channel being protected.

3.2.4.3* Extended Fan Decks. On towers having extended fan decks that completely enclose the distribution basin, the discharge outlets protecting the fill area shall be located over the basin, under the extension of the fan deck. These discharge outlets shall be open directional spray nozzles or other approved spray devices arranged to discharge 0.3 gpm/ft² (14.26 L/min·m²) directly on the distribution basin and 0.15 gpm/ft² (6.11 L/min·m²) on the underside of the fan deck extension. On towers having extended fan decks that do not completely enclose the hot water basin, outlets protecting the fill shall be located under the distribution basin as set out in 3.2.4.2.

3.2.4.4 Combustible Fan Decks. For deluge systems using directional spray nozzles in the pendant position, provisions shall be made to protect the underside of a combustible fan deck at a minimum of 0.15 gpm/ft² (6.11 L/min·m²), which shall be included as part of the application rate specified in 3.2.3.

3.2.4.5* Water Basin Covers. On film-filled towers that have solid, hot-water basin covers over the complete basin, the discharge outlets protecting the fill area shall be permitted to be located under the basin covers. These discharge outlets shall be open directional spray nozzles or other approved devices arranged to discharge 0.35 gpm/ft² (14.26 L/min·m²) directly on the distribution basin, and 0.15 gpm/ft² (6.11 L/min·m²) on the underside of the water basin covers. On towers having basin covers that do not completely enclose the hot water basin, outlets protecting the fill shall be located under the distribution basin as set out in 3.2.4.2.

3.2.5 Pipe, Fittings, and Hangers.

3.2.5.1* Piping shall be installed in accordance with the requirements of NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*.

3.2.5.2* Piping or tubing used within the cooling tower shall be metallic and approved for fire protection use.

Exception: Piping or tubing used for pneumatic detection systems shall be permitted to be of other materials suitable for use in a cooling tower environment.

3.2.5.3 Hydraulic calculations shall be made in accordance with Chapter 8 of NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*.

3.2.5.4 All fittings shall be of a type specifically approved for fire protection use. In dry sections of the system piping, which can be exposed to possible fire conditions, ferrous fittings shall be of steel, malleable iron, or ductile iron.

Exception: Cast-iron fittings shall be permitted to be used in pneumatic detection piping.

3.2.5.5 Approved, gasketed, groove-type fittings shall be permitted to connect pipe in fire-exposed areas where the fire protection system is operated automatically.

3.2.5.6 Where piping is supported from structural members of a cooling tower, the attachment shall be made so that the structural member is not split or otherwise damaged.

3.2.6 Valves.

3.2.6.1 General. Valves shall be installed in accordance with NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*, and NFPA 15, *Standard for Water Spray Fixed Systems for Fire Protection*. Shutoff valves and automatically operated water control valves, if provided, shall be located as follows:

- (1) Outside the fire-exposed area
- (2) As close to the cooling tower as possible to minimize the amount of pipe to the discharge device
- (3) Where they will be accessible during a fire emergency

3.2.6.2 Manual Release Valve. Remote manual release valves, where required, shall be conspicuously located and readily accessible during a fire emergency. Where remote, manual release valves are not required, an inspector's test valve shall be provided for each pilot-head-operated system.

3.2.7* Strainers. Strainers shall be required for systems utilizing discharge devices with waterways of less than 0.375-in. (9.5-mm) diameter.

3.2.8* Heat Detectors.

3.2.8.1 Where deluge or preaction systems are used, heat detectors shall be installed in accordance with the applicable sections of NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*®.

3.2.8.2 In mechanical induced-draft towers, heat detectors shall be located under the fan deck at the circumference of the fan opening and under the fan opening where necessary to comply with the following spacing requirements. (*For extended fan decks, see 3.2.8.3.*)

3.2.8.2.1 Fixed-temperature detectors shall be spaced not more than 8 ft (2.4 m) apart in any direction including the fan opening. Temperature ratings shall be selected in accordance with operating conditions, but shall be no less than intermediate.

3.2.8.2.2 Rate-of-rise detectors shall be spaced not more than 15 ft (4.6 m) apart in any direction. In pneumatic-type systems, for detectors inside the tower, there shall be no more than one detector for each mercury check in towers operating in cold climates, and two detectors for each mercury check in towers used during the warm months only or year-round in warm climates. There shall be no more than four detectors for each mercury check where the detectors are located outside the tower.

3.2.8.3 On towers having extended fan decks that completely enclose the distribution basin, detectors shall be located under the fan deck extension in accordance with standard, indoor-spacing rules for the type detectors used in accordance with NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*.

Exception: Where the fan deck extension is 16 ft (4.9 m) or less and this dimension is the length of the joist channel, then only one row of detectors centered on and at right angles to the joist channels shall be required. Spacing between detectors shall be in accordance with NFPA 72.

On towers having extended fan decks that do not completely enclose the hot water basin, detectors shall not be required under the fan deck extension.

3.2.8.4* Where the total number of deluge systems exceeds the number for which the water supply was designed, heat barriers shall be installed under the extended fan deck to separate the systems. Heat barriers shall extend from the fan deck structure to the distribution basin dividers.

3.2.8.5 Where heat detectors are inaccessible during tower operation, an accessible test detector shall be provided for each detection zone.

3.2.8.6 Heat detector components exposed to corrosive vapors or liquids shall be protected by materials of construction or by protective coatings applied by the equipment manufacturer.

3.2.9 Protection for Fan Drive Motor.

3.2.9.1 A heat detector and water discharge outlet shall be provided over each fan drive motor where the motor is located so that it is not within the protected area of the tower.

3.2.9.2 Provision shall be made to interlock the fan motors with the fire protection system so that the cooling tower fan motors will be stopped in the cell(s) for which the system is actuated. Where the continued operation of the fans is vital to the process, a manual override switch shall be permitted to be provided to reactivate the fan when it is determined that there is no fire.

3.2.10 Exposure Protection.

3.2.10.1 Where any combustible exterior surfaces of a tower, including the fan deck, distribution basins, and so on, are less than 100 ft (30.5 m) from significant concentrations of

combustibles such as structures or piled material, the combustible exposed surfaces of the tower shall be protected by an automatic water spray system.

3.2.10.2 Systems for exterior protection shall be designed with the same attention and care as interior systems. Pipe sizing shall be based on hydraulic calculations. Water supply and discharge rate shall be based on a minimum 0.15 gpm/ft² (6.11 L/min·m²) for all surfaces being protected.

3.2.11 Suppression Design. The design and installations shall comply with the applicable sections of NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*.

3.3 Corrosion Protection.

3.3.1* Piping, fittings, hangers, braces, and attachment hardware including fasteners shall be hot-dipped galvanized steel per ASTM A 153/A 153M, *Standard Specification for Zinc Coating (Hot Dip) on Iron and Steel Hardware*, or other materials having a superior corrosion resistance. Exposed pipe threads and bolts on fittings shall be protected against corrosion. All other components shall be corrosion resistant or protected against corrosion by a coating.

3.3.2* Wax-type coatings shall not be used on devices without fusible elements.

3.3.3* Special care shall be taken in the handling and installation of wax-coated or similar sprinklers to avoid damaging the coating. Corrosion-resistant coatings shall not be applied to the sprinklers by anyone other than the manufacturer of the sprinklers, except that in all cases any damage to the protective coating occurring at the time of installation shall be repaired at once using only the coating of the manufacturer of the sprinkler in an approved manner so that no part of the sprinkler will be exposed after the installation has been completed.

3.4* Hydrant Protection. Hydrants shall not be located closer than 40 ft (12.2 m) from towers.

3.5* Standpipe Protection. Towers with any combustible construction located on a building 50 ft (15.3 m) or more in height shall be provided with Class III standpipe protection (as defined in NFPA 14, *Standard for the Installation of Standpipe, Private Hydrant, and Hose Systems*) with hose connections within 200 ft (61.0 m) of all parts of the tower. Sufficient hose shall be provided to reach all parts of the tower. Provision shall be made for completely draining all exposed standpipe lines during winter. Hose equipment at each standpipe hose connection on the roof shall be protected from the weather in a cabinet or enclosure in accordance with NFPA 14.

3.6 Water Supply.

3.6.1 Deluge Systems.

3.6.1.1* Where all cells of a cooling tower are protected by a single deluge system, the water supply shall be adequate to supply all discharge outlets on that system.

3.6.1.2 Where two or more deluge systems are used to protect a cooling tower and fire-resistant partitions are not provided between the deluge systems, the water supply shall be adequate to supply all discharge outlets in the two most hydraulically demanding adjacent systems.

3.6.1.3* Where two or more deluge systems are separated by fire-resistant partitions, the water supply shall be adequate to supply all discharge outlets in the single most hydraulically demanding system.

3.6.2 Wet, Dry, and Preaction Systems.

3.6.2.1* Where each cell of the cooling tower is separated by a fire-resistant partition, the water supply shall be adequate to supply all discharge outlets in the hydraulically most demanding single cell.

3.6.2.2* Where fire-resistant partitions are not provided between each cell of a cooling tower, the water supply shall be adequate to supply all discharge outlets in the two most hydraulically demanding adjoining cells.

3.6.3 Hose Streams. Water supplies shall be sufficient to include a minimum of 500 gpm (1892.5 L/min) for hose streams in addition to the sprinkler requirements.

3.6.4 Duration. An adequate water supply of at least 2-hour duration shall be provided for the combination of the water supply specified in 3.6.1 or 3.6.2, plus the hose stream demand specified in 3.6.3.

3.7* Lightning Protection. Lightning protection, where provided, shall be installed in accordance with the provisions of NFPA 780, *Standard for the Installation of Lightning Protection Systems*.

3.8 Earthquake Protection. Where provided, earthquake-resistant construction shall be in accordance with applicable sections of NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*.

Chapter 4 Electrical Equipment and Wiring

4.1 Installation. Installation of all electrical equipment and wiring pertaining to water-cooling towers shall be in accordance with NFPA 70, *National Electrical Code*®.

4.2* Overcurrent Protection. Electric motors that are driving fans shall be provided with overcurrent protective devices as mandated by NFPA 70, *National Electrical Code*.

4.3 Stop Fan. A remote fan-motor switch shall be provided to stop the fan in case of fire.

4.4 Interlock. When a fire protection system is installed, provisions shall be made to interlock the fan motors with the sprinkler system as set forth in Chapter 3.

4.5 Vibration-Controlled Switch. An automatic vibration-controlled switch shall be provided to shut down fan motors automatically.

Chapter 5 Internal Combustion Engine-Driven Fans

5.1 Internal Combustion Engines. Electric motors or steam turbines shall be the preferred drives to operate fans on cooling towers. Where neither is available, internal combustion engines shall be permitted to be used, provided they are installed, used, and maintained in accordance with NFPA 37, *Standard for the Installation and Use of Stationary Combustion Engines and Gas Turbines*.

Chapter 6 Maintenance

6.1 Housekeeping. Areas around towers located on the ground shall be kept free of grass, weeds, brush, or combustible waste materials.

6.2 Smoking. Smoking shall not be permitted on or adjacent to any cooling tower of combustible construction. Signs to this effect shall be posted and maintained and this regulation shall be strictly enforced.

6.3 Mechanical Inspection. Forced- and induced-draft towers in continuous operation shall be checked for excessive heating in motors and for excessive fan vibration.

6.4 Inspection Frequency. At least semiannually, the fan assemblies, including the motors and speed reducers, shall be checked, both during operation and when shut down, for excessive wear or vibration, improper lubrication, corrosion, or other features that could result in failure. Where conditions require, corrective action shall be taken.

6.5 Welding and Cutting. Where work on the tower requires welding or cutting, it shall be done in accordance with NFPA 51B, *Standard for Fire Prevention During Welding, Cutting, and Other Hot Work*.

6.6* Down Time. Because combustible cooling towers are particularly susceptible to ignition when they are shut down for repairs or other reasons and the wood becomes dried out, during these periods, all automatic fire protection on the tower shall be operable; or if the tower is not so protected, special protection shall be provided until the tower is back in service.

6.7 Access. Access to the tops of water-cooling towers for fire fighting and maintenance shall be provided by an approved stairway or ladder. Towers in excess of 120 ft (36.6 m) in any dimension shall be provided with not less than two means of access remote from each other.

6.8 Lockout. Motors, speed reduction units, and drive shafts shall be accessible for servicing and maintenance. Provisions shall be made for lockout or tagout of electric motors when maintenance work is being performed in the area of fans.

6.9 Temporary Supports. After maintenance work is completed, all scaffolding, boards, temporary supports, and other temporary materials shall be removed from the tower.

6.10 Maintenance of Fire Protection Systems. Maintenance of fire protection systems shall be in accordance with NFPA 25, *Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems*.

Chapter 7 Referenced Publications

7.1 The following documents or portions thereof are referenced within this standard as mandatory requirements and shall be considered part of the requirements of this standard. The edition indicated for each referenced mandatory document is the current edition as of the date of the NFPA issuance of this standard. Some of these mandatory documents might also be referenced in this standard for specific informational purposes and, therefore, are also listed in Appendix C.

7.1.1 NFPA Publications. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*, 1999 edition.

NFPA 14, *Standard for the Installation of Standpipe, Private Hydrant, and Hose Systems*, 2000 edition.

NFPA 15, *Standard for Water Spray Fixed Systems for Fire Protection*, 1996 edition.

NFPA 25, *Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems*, 1998 edition.

NFPA 37, *Standard for the Installation and Use of Stationary Combustion Engines and Gas Turbines*, 1998 edition.

NFPA 51B, *Standard for Fire Prevention During Welding, Cutting, and Other Hot Work*, 1999 edition.

NFPA 70, *National Electrical Code*®, 1999 edition.

NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*®, 1999 edition.

NFPA 251, *Standard Methods of Tests of Fire Endurance of Building Construction and Materials*, 1999 edition.

NFPA 780, *Standard for the Installation of Lightning Protection Systems*, 2000 edition.

7.1.2 Other Publications.

7.1.2.1 ASTM Publication. American Society for Testing and Materials, 100 Barr Harbor Drive, West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959.

ASTM A 153/A 153M, *Standard Specification for Zinc Coating (Hot Dip) on Iron and Steel Hardware*, 1995.

Appendix A Explanatory Material

Appendix A is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document but is included for informational purposes only. This appendix contains explanatory material, numbered to correspond with the applicable text paragraphs.

A.1.1 The fire record of water-cooling towers indicates a failure to recognize the extent or seriousness of the potential fire hazard of these structures either while in operation or when temporarily shut down. Cooling towers of combustible construction, especially those of the induced-draft type, present a potential fire hazard even when in full operation because of the existence of relatively dry areas within the towers.

A significant percentage of fires in water-cooling towers of combustible construction are caused by ignition from outside sources such as incinerators, smokestacks, or exposure fires. Fires in cooling towers can create an exposure hazard to adjacent buildings and processing units. Therefore, distance separation from buildings and sources of ignition or the use of noncombustible construction are primary considerations in preventing these fires.

Ignition within these structures can be caused by welding or cutting operations, smoking, overheated bearings, electrical failures, and other heat- or spark-producing sources.

Fires have also occurred during the construction of cooling towers. Measures should be taken during construction to prevent the accumulation of combustible waste materials such as wood borings, shavings, scrap lumber, or other easily ignited materials. "No Smoking" regulations and strict control of welding and other heat- or spark-producing operations should be enforced. Wetting down combustible portions of the tower during idle periods of construction is a good fire prevention practice.

Cooling water supplied to heat exchangers, which are used for cooling flammable gases or liquids or combustible liquids where the cooling water pressure is less than that of the mate-

rial being cooled, can constitute an unusual hazard to the cooling tower by the return of the flammables or combustibles to the cooling tower water distribution system.

A.1.1.1 This standard does not apply more or less strictly to factory-assembled units than did earlier revisions. Because these units have typically been steel frame/structure with PVC fill, one should evaluate protection requirements in accordance with 1.1.2, with item (2) being specifically noted. In all cases, 1.1.2 should be reviewed for making the determination with regard to the installation of fire suppression. In some cases, no fire suppression is required.

A.1.1.2 No standard can be promulgated that will guarantee the elimination of fires in water-cooling towers. Technology in this area is under constant development and will be reflected in revisions to this standard. The user of this standard should recognize the complexity of fire protection requirements for water-cooling towers. Therefore, the designer is cautioned that this standard is not a design handbook. This standard does not do away with the need for the engineer or for competent engineering judgment. It is intended that a designer, capable of applying more complete and rigorous analysis to special or unusual problems, has latitude in the development of such designs. In such cases, the designer is responsible for demonstrating the validity of the approach.

Fire experience for mechanical forced-draft towers does not indicate the general need for automatic fire protection systems. However, exposure protection may be necessary as provided in 3.2.10.

A.1.1.2(2) There are several fire tests that can be used to evaluate the fire risk related to water-cooling tower materials. The most suitable tests are those that demonstrate low fire risk where tested in a configuration that approximates the large scale of the installation. Tests such as ASTM E 136, *Standard Test Method for Behavior of Materials in a Vertical Tube Furnace at 750°C*, and ASTM E 84, *Standard Test Method for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials*, have limitations. The test methods do not duplicate the larger extent of the hazard in its final installation and are not necessarily suitable or generally satisfactory for materials that soften, flow, or melt under fire conditions.

A.1.1.2(8) Piping arrangements, system capacities, and supervisory air pressures should be designed such that the time for water delivery to the most remote discharge device is minimized. For all water suppression systems using detection, the detection system should be designed to cause actuation of the special water control valve within 20 seconds under expected exposure conditions (see NFPA 15, *Standard for Water Spray Fixed Systems for Fire Protection*, Section 7.4.2).

A.1.2.2 Approved. The National Fire Protection Association does not approve, inspect, or certify any installations, procedures, equipment, or materials; nor does it approve or evaluate testing laboratories. In determining the acceptability of installations, procedures, equipment, or materials, the authority having jurisdiction may base acceptance on compliance with NFPA or other appropriate standards. In the absence of such standards, said authority may require evidence of proper installation, procedure, or use. The authority having jurisdiction may also refer to the listings or labeling practices of an organization concerned with product evaluations that is in a position to determine compliance with appropriate standards for the current production of listed items.

A.1.2.3 Authority Having Jurisdiction. The phrase “authority having jurisdiction” is used in NFPA documents in a broad manner, since jurisdictions and approval agencies vary, as do their responsibilities. Where public safety is primary, the authority having jurisdiction may be a federal, state, local, or other regional department or individual such as a fire chief; fire marshal; chief of a fire prevention bureau, labor department, or health department; building official; electrical inspector; or others having statutory authority. For insurance purposes, an insurance inspection department, rating bureau, or other insurance company representative may be the authority having jurisdiction. In many circumstances, the property owner or his or her designated agent assumes the role of the authority having jurisdiction; at government installations, the commanding officer or departmental official may be the authority having jurisdiction.

A.1.2.4 Cell. Each cell can have one or more fans or stacks and one or more distribution systems. For the purposes of this standard, a cell within a hyperbolic tower is considered the area bounded by fire-resistant partitions.

A.1.2.6 Cooling Tower. See Figure B.1(a).

A.1.2.6.1 Counterflow. See Figure B.1(d).

A.1.2.6.2 Crossflow. See Figure B.1(e).

A.1.2.6.3 Mechanical-Draft. When the fans or blowers are at the air inlet, the tower is considered forced-draft. When the fans or blowers are at the air exit, the tower is considered induced-draft. [See Figure B.1(c).]

A.1.2.6.4 Natural-Draft. See Figure B.1(b).

A.1.2.8 Fire-Resistant Partition. Examples of some types of construction that meet this requirement are 1/2-in. (12.7-mm) asbestos cement board, 1/2-in. (12.7-mm) plywood, or 3/4-in. (19.1-mm) tongue-and-groove boarding where installed on both sides of wood studs. Other types of materials should be tested in accordance with NFPA 251, *Standard Methods of Tests of Fire Endurance of Building Construction and Materials*.

A.1.2.10 Listed. The means for identifying listed equipment may vary for each organization concerned with product evaluation; some organizations do not recognize equipment as listed unless it is also labeled. The authority having jurisdiction should utilize the system employed by the listing organization to identify a listed product.

A.3.1.1 The use of antifreeze sprinkler systems in cooling towers is not recommended. While in theory this type of system would function, the use of antifreeze systems in cooling towers presents problems not encountered in usual antifreeze applications.

Due to the inaccessibility of the piping during normal operation of the cooling tower, it is practically impossible to do any maintenance work or to make routine inspections. The corrosion problem can be quite serious in cooling towers, and leaks in the system will not readily become apparent. These leaks would result in loss of the antifreeze solution and could result in freezing of the system.

Local ordinances in many areas prohibit the use of these systems.

A.3.2.2.1 A deluge system provides a higher degree of protection where water supplies are adequate. In climates that are subject to freezing temperatures, a deluge system minimizes the possibility of failure due to pipes freezing.

A.3.2.2.2 The crossflow design is such that it is difficult to locate sprinklers in the most desirable spots for both water distribution and heat detection. This situation can be solved by separating these two functions and using separate water discharge and detection systems.

A.3.2.4.1 The following figures show typical plan and section views of fire protection systems in counterflow water-cooling towers. See Figures A.3.2.4.1 (a) through A.3.2.4.1 (d).

FIGURE A.3.2.4.1(a) Plan view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for counterflow towers.

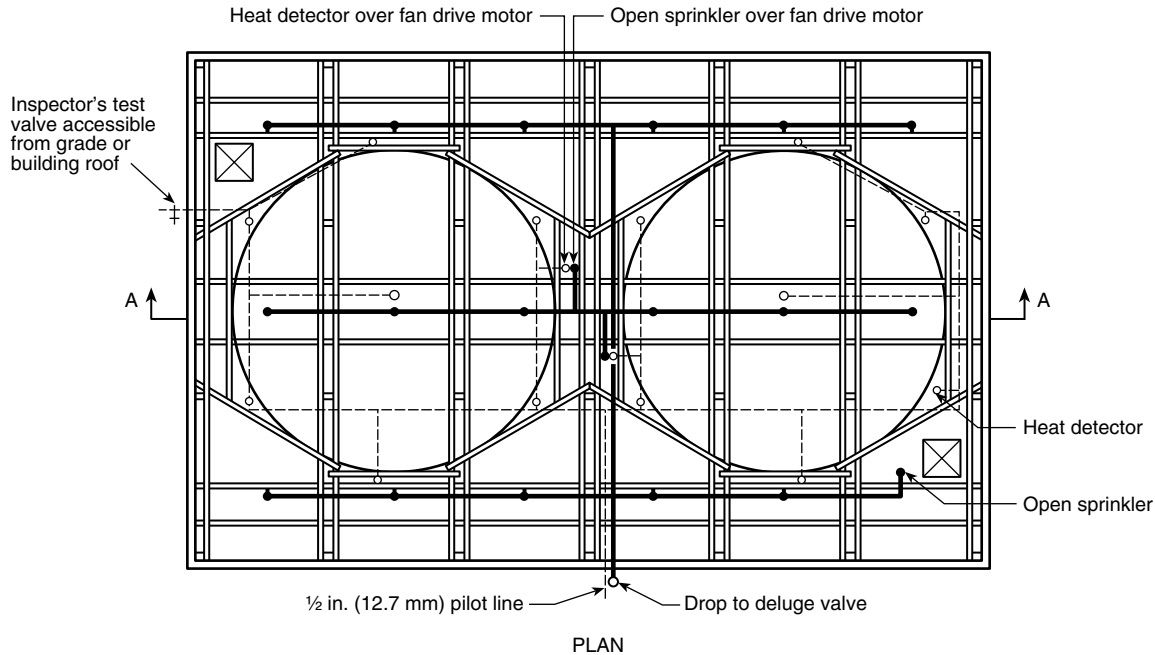


FIGURE A.3.2.4.1(b) Section view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for counterflow towers.

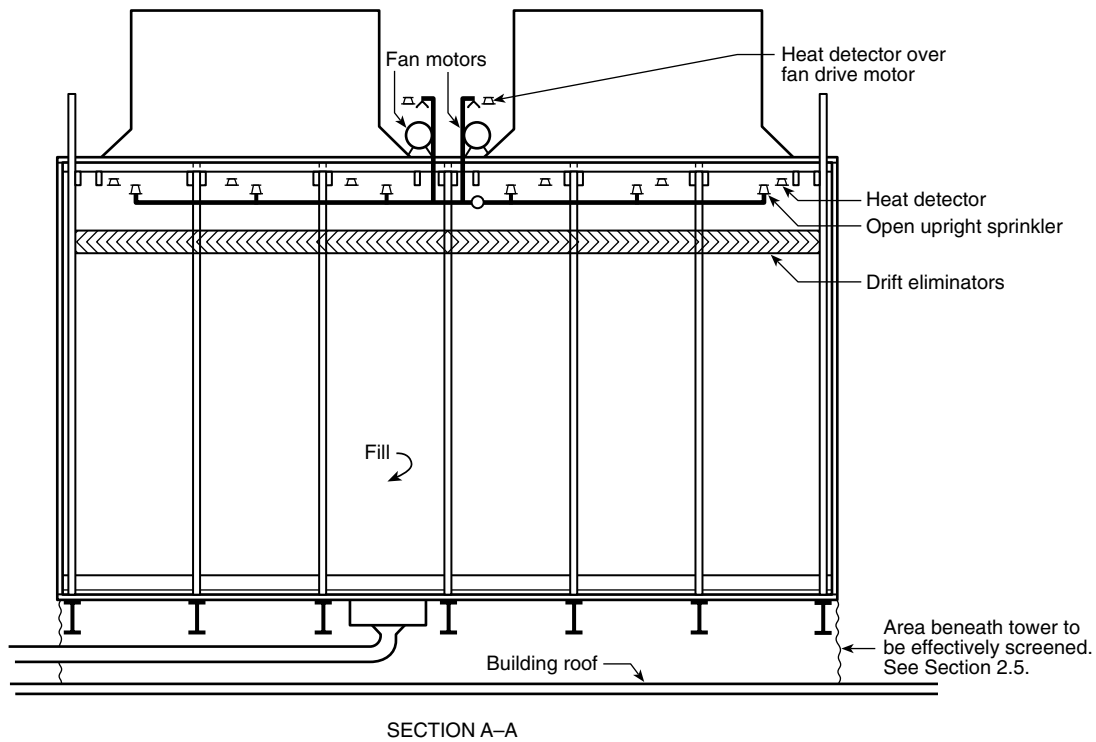
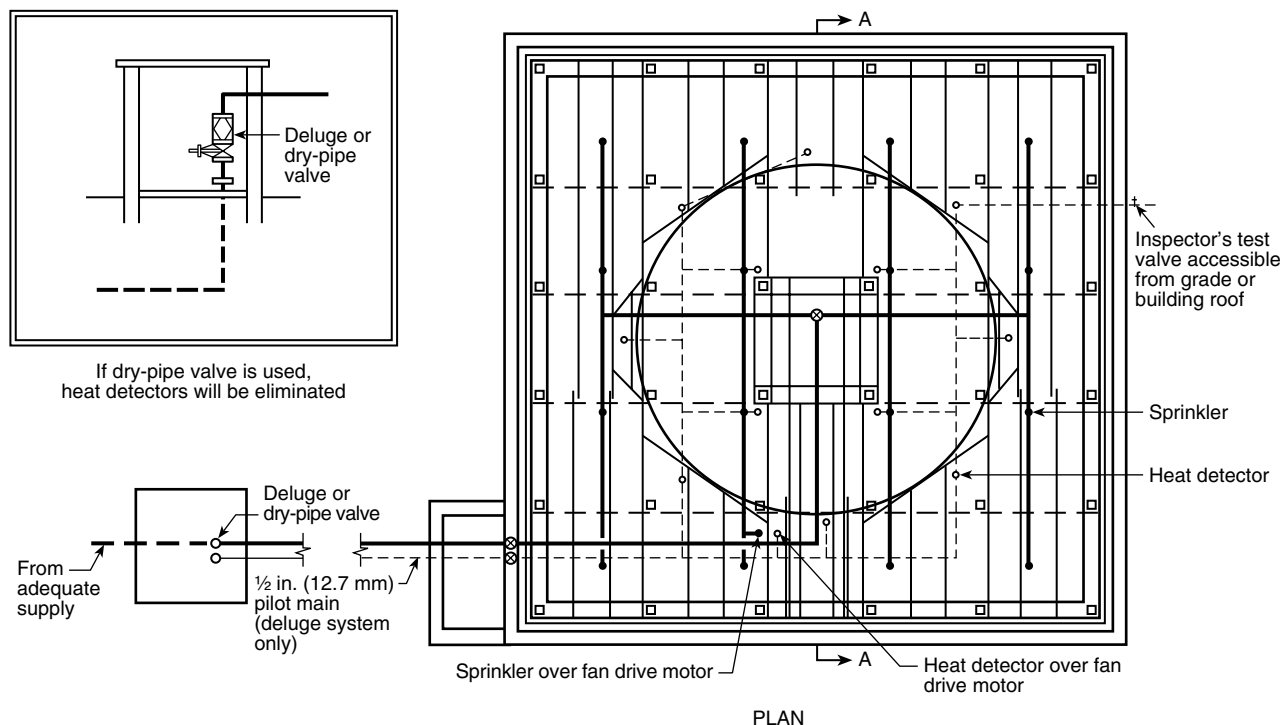
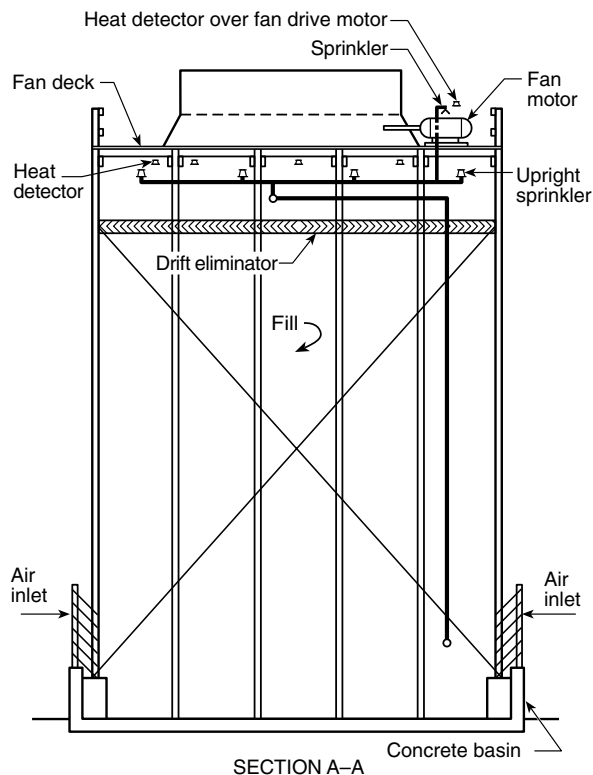


FIGURE A.3.2.4.1(c) Plan view, typical deluge or dry pipe fire protection arrangement for counterflow towers.**FIGURE A.3.2.4.1(d) Section view, typical deluge or dry pipe fire protection arrangement for counterflow towers.**

A.3.2.4.2 The following figures show typical plan and section views of fire protection systems in crossflow water-cooling towers. See Figures A.3.2.4.2(a) through A.3.2.4.2(d).

A.3.2.4.3 Location of the nozzle relative to surfaces to be protected should be determined by the particular nozzle's discharge characteristics. Care should also be taken in the selection of nozzles to obtain waterways not easily obstructed by debris, sediment, sand, and so on, in the water. Refer to Figures A.3.2.4.3(a) and A.3.2.4.3(b).

A.3.2.4.5 Figure A.3.2.4.5 shows a detail of the sprinklers and target nozzles for an enclosed distribution basin in a crossflow tower.

A.3.2.5.1 In towers where vibration is anticipated to cause movement of the fire protection system, resulting in wear of water or detection piping or tubing at the hangers, it will be necessary to install vibration absorbers between the hangers and the pipe.

Special consideration should be given to the support of detection piping or tubing due to its small diameter. Thin-wall or nonmetallic pipe or tubing usually requires close spacing of hangers for adequate support.

A.3.2.5.2 Where plastic piping or tubing is used for pneumatic detection systems, consideration should be given to the effects of ultraviolet radiation.

A.3.2.7 See NFPA 15, *Standard for Water Spray Fixed Systems for Fire Protection*, for further details.

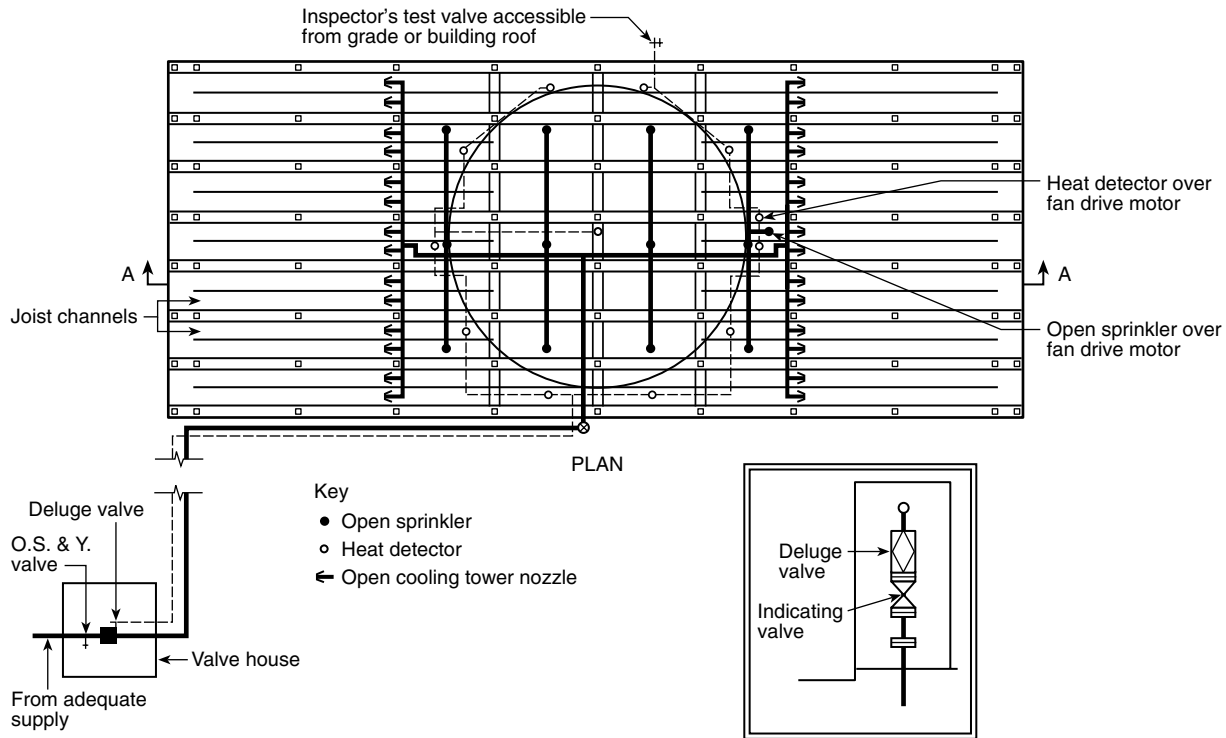
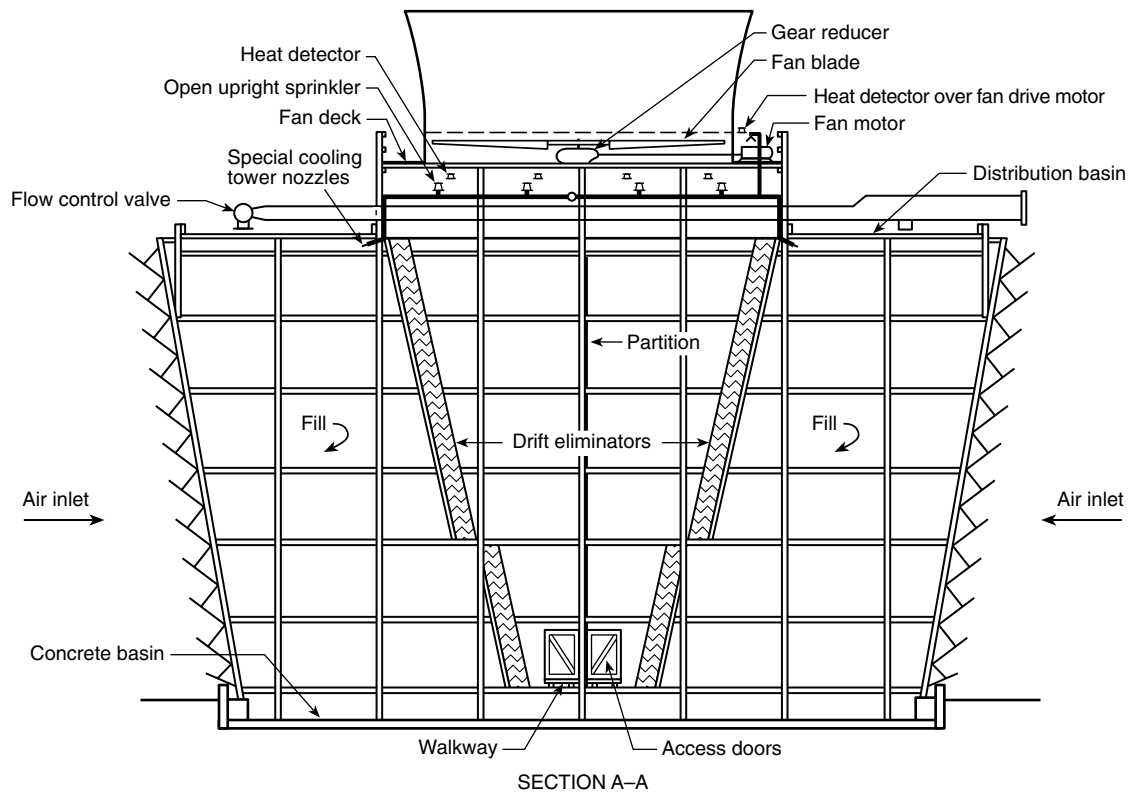
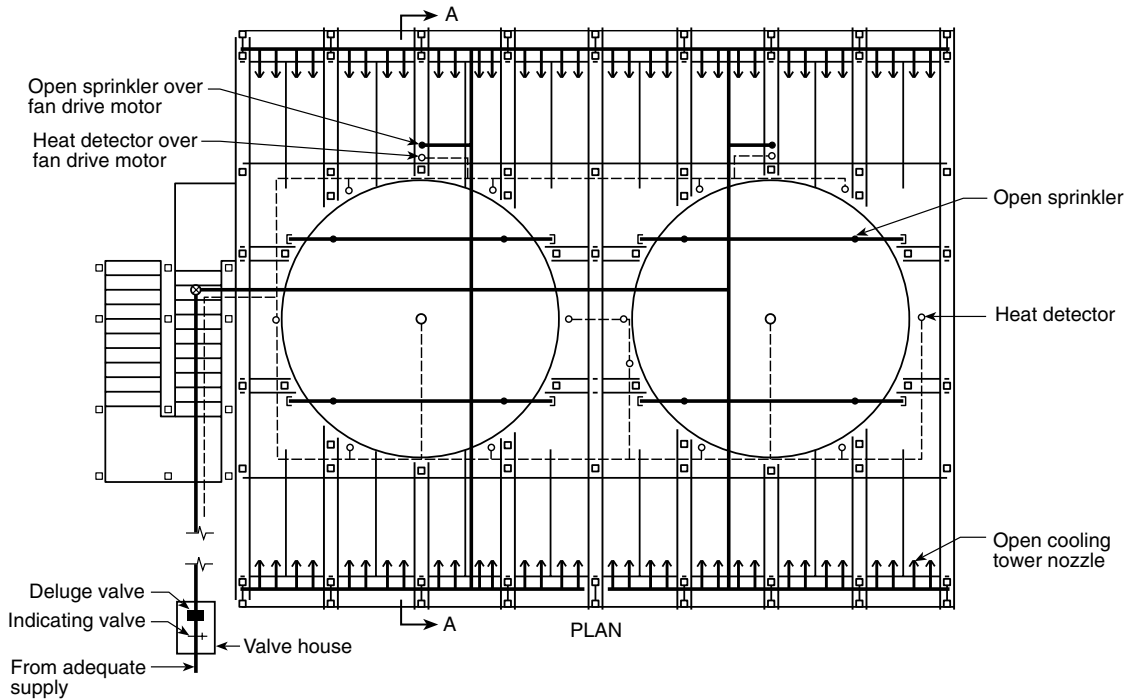
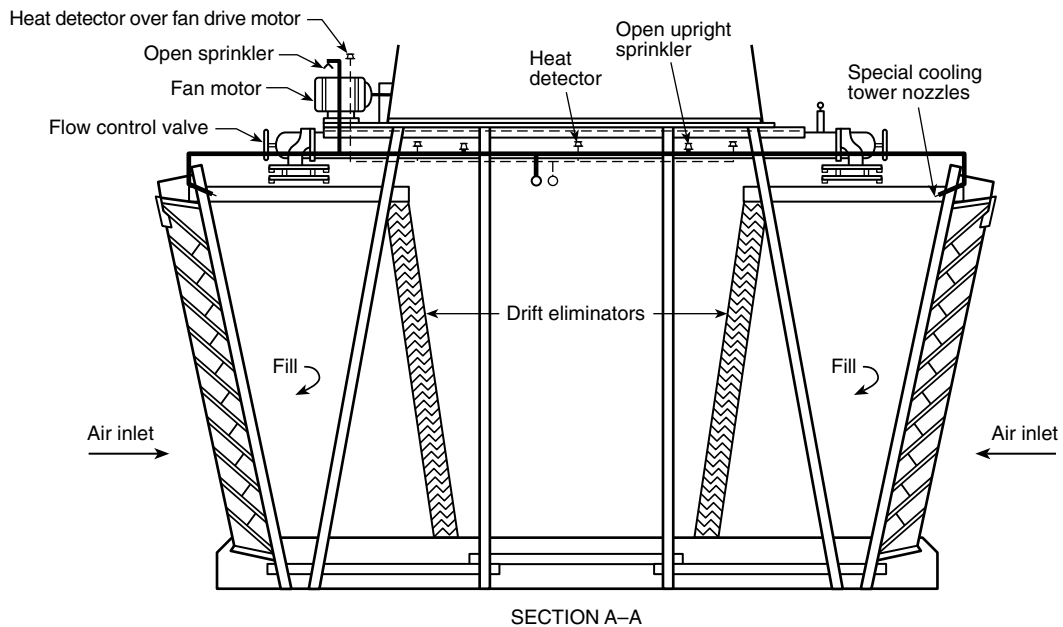
FIGURE A.3.2.4.2(a) Plan view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for crossflow towers.**FIGURE A.3.2.4.2(b) Section view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for crossflow towers.**

FIGURE A.3.2.4.2(c) Plan view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for multicell crossflow towers.

Note: Where air seal boards prevent installation of cooling tower nozzles on drift eliminator side of fill, this nozzle location should be used.

FIGURE A.3.2.4.2(d) Section view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for multicell crossflow towers.

Note: Where air seal boards prevent installation of cooling tower nozzles on drift eliminator side of fill, this nozzle location should be used.

FIGURE A.3.2.4.3(a) Plan view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for crossflow towers with completely enclosed distribution basins.

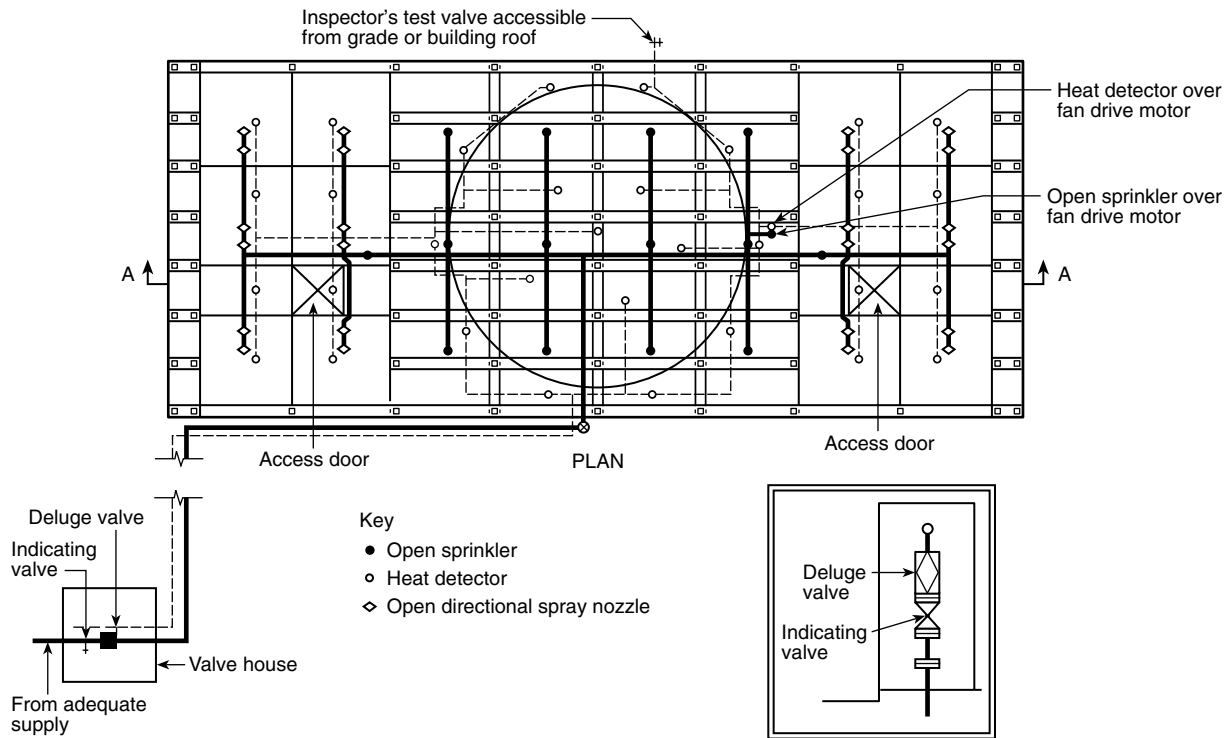


FIGURE A.3.2.4.3(b) Section view, typical deluge fire protection arrangement for crossflow towers with completely enclosed distribution basins.

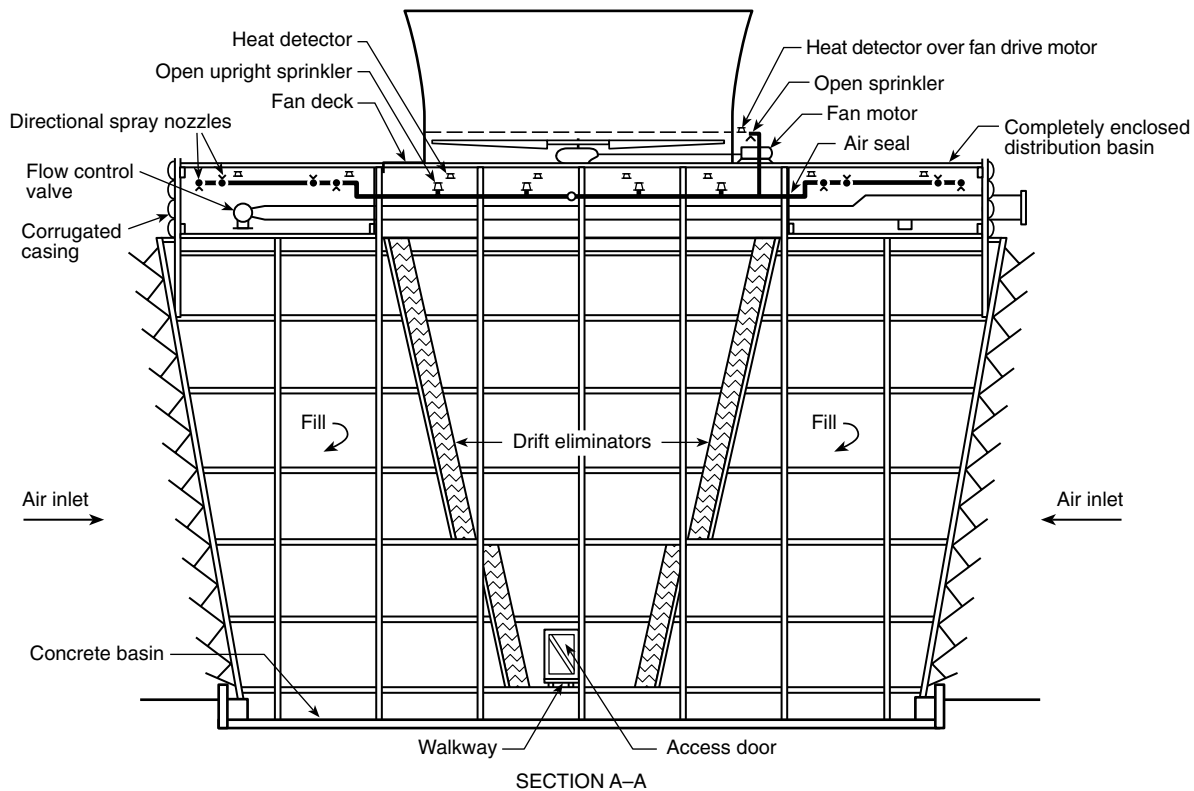
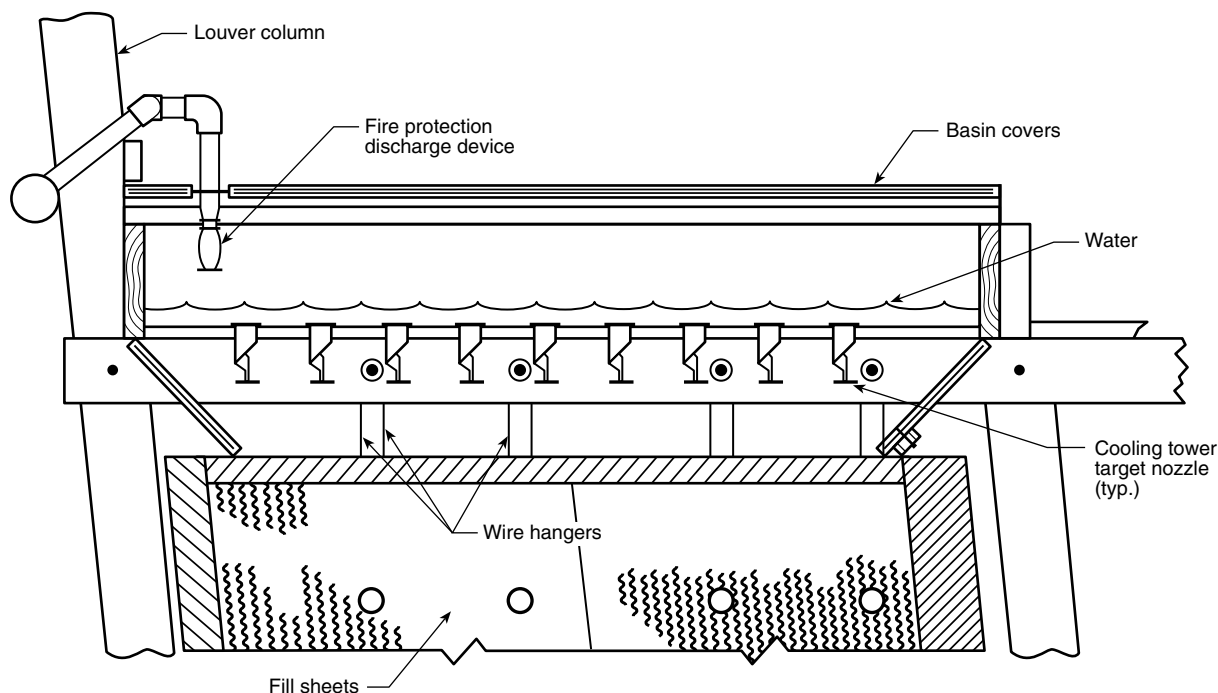


FIGURE A.3.2.4.5 Typical deluge fire protection arrangement for crossflow towers with covers completely enclosing distribution basins.



A.3.2.8 Due to the extremely humid atmosphere and potentially corrosive conditions in cooling towers, it is very difficult to maintain electrical detection equipment. Experience has shown that even with weatherproof equipment and wiring practices, an electrical system will malfunction frequently. Therefore, the information in the subparagraphs of this section is based on the use of detectors operating on pneumatic or hydraulic principles.

A.3.2.8.4 Acceptable materials are $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. (9.5-mm) plywood or $\frac{3}{16}$ -in. (4.8-mm) asbestos cement board on one side of studs.

A.3.3.1 Corrosion of exposed pipe threads and bolts on fittings is a concern. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that corrosion protection is as equivalent to hot-dipped galvanized as possible. Experience has shown that cadmium-plated components corrode at an accelerated rate compared to hot-dipped galvanized components.

If circulating tower water quality has the following characteristics, an upgrade of hot-dipped, galvanized, sprinkler components should be considered:

- (1) Calcium, as CaCO_3 <50 ppm
- (2) Chloride >450 ppm as Cl^- (270 ppm as NaCl)
- (3) pH <6.5
- (4) pH >9.0
- (5) Hot water temperature >140°F

Other unusual water uses include geothermal power, paper processing, and Stretford process, each of which can require component material upgrade.

A.3.3.2 Approved discharge devices are made of nonferrous material and are corrosion resistant to normal atmospheres. Some atmospheres require special coatings on the discharge devices.

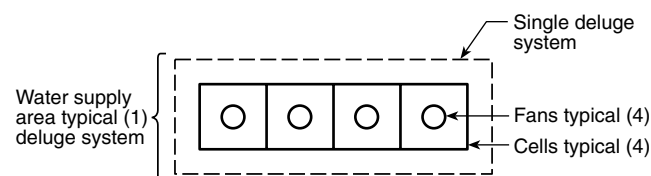
A.3.3.3 Corrosion will attack the exposed metal and will, in time, creep under the wax coating.

A.3.4 Hydrant protection should be provided within 200 ft (61.0 m) of all parts of towers having combustible construction and located on the ground or on buildings less than 50 ft (15.3 m) in height. A hose house and standard hose house equipment should be provided at each hydrant. (See NFPA 24, *Standard for the Installation of Private Fire Service Mains and Their Appurtenances*, for further details.)

A.3.5 Standpipes should preferably be located in stair towers. If located on an open roof, they should not be closer than 40 ft (12.2 m) to the cooling tower.

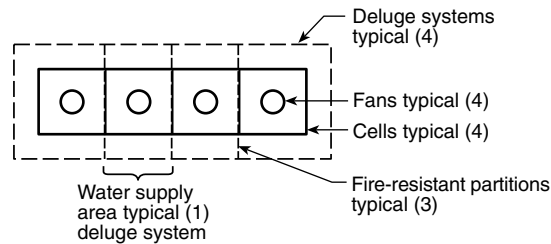
A.3.6.1.1 Where a single deluge system protects an entire water-cooling tower, regardless of the number of cells, the water supply needs to be based on the entire deluge system coverage. Refer to Figure A.3.6.1.1.

FIGURE A.3.6.1.1 Single deluge system.



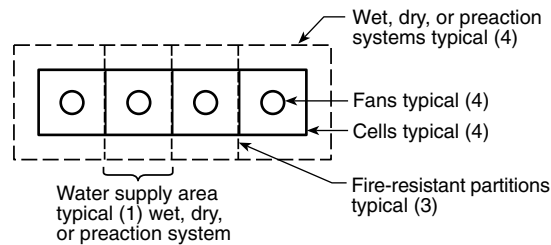
A.3.6.1.3 Deluge systems separated by fire-resistant partitions can be treated independently as worst-case water supply situations. Refer to Figure A.3.6.1.3.

FIGURE A.3.6.1.3 Multiple deluge systems.



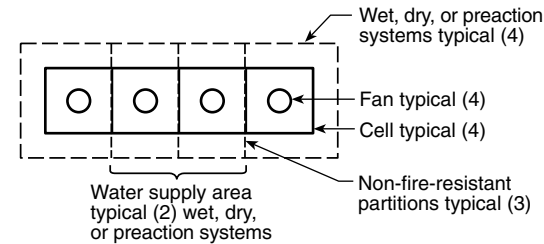
A.3.6.2.1 Water-cooling towers with each cell separated by a fire-resistant partition and protected by wet, dry, or preaction system(s) should have the water supply based on the most demanding individual cell. Refer to Figure A.3.6.2.1.

FIGURE A.3.6.2.1 Multiple wet, dry, or preaction systems with fire-resistant partitions.



A.3.6.2.2 Without fire-resistant partitions between cells, the worst-case situation involves the most demanding adjoining cells. Refer to Figure A.3.6.2.2.

FIGURE A.3.6.2.2 Multiple wet, dry, or preaction systems with no fire-resistant partitions.



A.3.7 Towers located on roofs of buildings in certain geographical locations can be particularly susceptible to lightning damage.

A.4.2 Motors should be totally enclosed to protect them from dirt or moisture and to prevent sparks from reaching adjacent combustible construction.

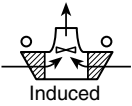
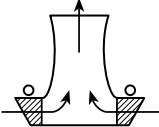
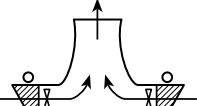
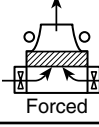
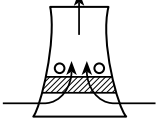
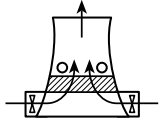
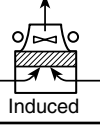
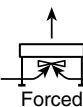
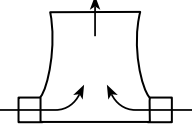
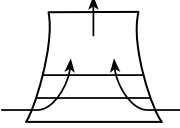
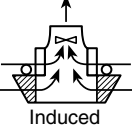
A.6.6 Examples of special protection are watch service or intermittent wetting, or both.

Appendix B Water-Cooling Tower Types

This appendix is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document but is included for informational purposes only.

B.1 Figures B.1(a) through B.1(e) represent typical configurations of the many types of water-cooling towers.

FIGURE B.1(a) Summary of typical cooling towers. (Reprinted with permission of Factory Mutual Engineering and Research)

	Draft	Mechanical	Natural	Mechanical and Natural
Wet				
Crossflow				
Counterflow				
Dry				
Wet-dry				
Parallel flow				

Legend

 Fans

 Water manifold

 Wet fill

 Dry fill