

October 14, 2013

An Important note from the Principal Investigator Abolhassan ASTANEH-ASL, on the document that follows:

I wrote this article in early 2002 discussing the history of fire engineering at UC Berkeley.

Respectfully,

Abolhassan ASTANEH-ASL, Ph.D., P.E.

Professor and P.I. for the NSF Funded UC Berkeley WTC Project

History of Fire Safety Engineering at University of California, Berkeley

January 30, 2002

The history of fire research and testing at Berkeley is long and illustrious. The first Fire Test furnace was built just after World War II on the Berkeley campus in the court yard of the Engineering Materials Laboratory (now a part of Davis Hall). Professors R. E. Davis and G. E. Troxell were the principal investigators. Numerous fire resistance tests were conducted there on wall assemblies and fire doors at the request of a variety of industrial sponsors from California and other parts of the USA. In 1966, the Fire Test facility moved from the campus to the Richmond Field Station.

Fire Safety Engineering is intrinsically an interdisciplinary subject, and in 1972 a team of approximately eleven faculty from a number of different departments initiated a research program, "Fire Safety in Urban Housing," which was funded by the National Science Foundation under its RANN (Research Applied to National Needs) Program. This marked the beginning of the modern era of fire research at Berkeley. In 1977, the funding was shifted to the Center for Fire Research (CFR) at the National Bureau of Standards* where it has continued to the present. Over the years, there have been many other fire research programs, funded by both government and private sources such as HUD, NASA, NRC, DNA, FAA, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), Intel, American Textile Manufacturers Institute (ATMI), the California State Fire Marshal, and the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. In the last fifteen years, with support from the insurance industry, a large number of full scale fire experiments have been conducted to simulate conditions from the Las Vegas MGM Hotel fire, the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel fire, San Juan Dupont Plaza Hotel fire, and the Philadelphia high rise fire.

* Now the National Institute of Standards and Technology