C Explanation of Test Data and Procedures for Rack Storage

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

C.1

Annex C provides an explanation of the test data and procedures that led to the development of sprinkler system discharge criteria for rack storage applications. Numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs in the text.

C.2 [20.3]

A review of full-scale fire tests run on the standard commodity (double tri-wall carton with metal liner), of Hallmark products and 3M products (e.g., abrasives, pressure-sensitive tapes of plastic fiber, and paper), and of the considerable number of commodity tests conducted provides a guide for commodity classifications. Such guidance is not related to any other method of classification of materials; therefore, sound engineering judgment and analysis of the commodity and the packaging should be used when selecting a commodity classification.

C.3 [25.1.6.4]

Tests 71, 73, 81, 83, 91, 92, 95, and 100 in the 20 ft (6.1 m) high array involving a single level of in-rack sprinklers were conducted without heat or water shields. Results were satisfactory.

Test 115 was conducted with two levels of sprinklers in racks with shields. Test 116, identical to Test 115 but without water shields, produced a lack of control. Visual observation of lower level in-rack sprinklers that did not operate although they were in the fire area indicated a need for water shields.

Tests 115 and 116 were conducted to investigate the necessity for water shields where multiple levels of in-rack sprinklers are installed. Where water shields were not installed in Test 116, the fire jumped the aisle, and approximately 76 boxes were damaged. In Test 115 with water shields, the fire did not jump the aisle, and only 32 boxes were damaged. Water shields are, therefore, suggested wherever multiple levels of in-rack sprinklers are installed, except for installations with horizontal barriers or shelves that serve as water shields.

C.4 [A.25.1.4.3]

The time of operation of the first sprinkler varied from 52 seconds to 3 minutes and 55 seconds, with most tests under 3 minutes, except in Test 64 (Class III), where the first sprinkler operated in 7 minutes and 44 seconds. Fire detection more sensitive than waterflow is, therefore, considered necessary only in exceptional cases.

C.5 [16.15.1 and 20.14.1]

In most tests conducted, it was necessary to use small hose for mop-up operations. Small hose was not used in the high-expansion foam test.

Test 97 was conducted to evaluate the effect of dry pipe sprinkler operation. Test results were approximately the same as the base test with a wet pipe system. A study of NFPA records, however, indicates an increase in area of operation of 30 percent to be in order for dry pipe systems as compared with wet pipe systems.

C.6 [20.9.5]

Tests were conducted as a part of this program with eave line windows or louvers open to simulate smoke and heat venting. These tests opened 87.5 percent and 91 percent more sprinklers than did comparative tests without windows or louvers open. Venting tests that have been conducted in other programs were without the benefit of sprinkler protection and, as such, are not considered in this report, which covers only buildings protected by sprinklers. The design curves are based upon the absence of roof vents or draft curtains in the building. During mop-up operations, ventilating systems, where installed, should be capable of manual exhaust operations.

C.7 [20.17.1.3]

No tests were conducted with idle pallets in racks using standard spray sprinklers. However, tests were conducted using ESFR and large drop sprinklers. Such storage conceivably would introduce fire severity in excess of that contemplated by protection criteria for an individual commodity classification.

C.8 [20.15]

In all valid tests with double-row racks, sprinkler water supplies were shut off at approximately 60 minutes. In only one test did the last sprinkler operate in excess of 30 minutes after ignition; the last sprinkler operated in excess of 25 minutes in three tests, with the majority of tests involving the last sprinkler operating within 20 minutes.

C.9 [25.1.1.2]

The discharge criteria of Section 20.13 uses as a basis the large-scale fire test series conducted at the Factory Mutual Research Center, West Glocester, Rhode Island.

The test building is approximately 200 ft × 250 ft (61 m × 76 m) [50,000 ft^2 (4650 m^2) in area], of fire-resistive construction, and contains a volume of approximately 2.25 million ft^3 (63,713 m^3), the equivalent of a 100,000 ft^2 (9230 m^2) building that is 22.5 ft (6.9 m) high. The test building has two primary heights beneath a single large ceiling. The east section is 30 ft (9.1 m) high, and the west section is 60 ft (18 m) high.

The test series for storage height of 20 ft (6.1 m) was conducted in the 30 ft (9.1 m) section with clearances from the top of storage to the ceiling nominally 10 ft (3.0 m).

Doors at the lower and intermediate levels and ventilation louvers at the tops of walls were kept closed during the majority of the fire tests, which minimized the effect of exterior conditions.

The entire test series was fully instrumented with thermocouples attached to rack members, simulated building columns, bar joists, and the ceiling.

Racks were constructed of steel vertical and horizontal members designed for 4000 lb (1815 kg) loads. Vertical members were 8 ft (2.4 m) on center for conventional racks and 4 ft (1.2 m) on center for simulated automated racks. Racks were $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft (1 m) wide with 6 in. (150 mm) longitudinal flue space for an overall width of $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft (2.3 m). Simulated automated racks and slave pallets were used in the main central rack in the 4 ft (1.2 m) aisle tests. Conventional racks and conventional pallets were used in the main central rack in the 8 ft (2.4 m) aisle tests. The majority of the tests were conducted with 100 ft^2 (9.3 m^2) sprinkler spacing.

The test configuration for storage heights of 15 ft (4.6 m), 20 ft (6.1 m), and 25 ft (7.6 m) covered an 1800 ft^2 (167.2 m^2) floor area, including aisles between racks. Tests that were used in producing this standard limited fire damage to this area. The maximum water damage area anticipated in the standard is 6000 ft^2 (555 m^2), the upper limit of the design curves.

The test data show that, as density is increased, both the extent of fire damage and sprinkler operation are reduced. The data also indicate that, with sprinklers installed in the racks, a reduction is gained in the area of fire damage and sprinkler operations (e.g., water damage).

Table C.9 illustrates these points. The information shown in the table is taken from the test series for storage height of 20 ft (6.1 m) using the standard commodity.

The fact that there is a reduction in both fire damage and area of water application as sprinkler densities are increased or where sprinklers are installed in racks should be considered carefully by those responsible for applying this standard to the rack storage situation.

In the test for storage height of 25 ft (7.6 m), a density of 0.55 gpm/ft^2 (22.4 mm/min) produced 42 percent, or 756 ft^2 (70 m^2), fire damage in the test array and a sprinkler-wetted area of 1400 ft^2 (130 m^2). Lesser densities would not be expected to achieve the same limited degree of control. Therefore, if the goal of smaller areas of fire damage is to be achieved, sprinklers in racks should be considered.

The test series for storage height over 25 ft (7.6 m) was conducted in the 60 ft (18 m) section of the test building with nominal clearances from the top of storage to the ceiling of either 30 ft (9.1 m) or 10 ft (3.0 m).

Doors at the lower and intermediate levels and ventilation louvers at the top of walls were kept closed during the fire tests, which minimized the effect of exterior wind conditions.

The purpose of the tests for storage height over 25 ft (7.6 m) was to accomplish the following:

(1) Determine the arrangement of in-rack sprinklers that can be repeated as pile height increases and that provide control of the fire
(2) Determine other protective arrangements, such as high-expansion foam, that provide control of the fire

Control was considered to have been accomplished if the fire was unlikely to spread from the rack of origin to adjacent racks or spread beyond the length of the 25 ft (7.6 m) test rack. To aid in this judgment, control was considered to have been achieved if the fire failed to exhibit the following characteristics:

(1) Jump the 4 ft (1.2 m) aisles to adjoining racks

(2) Reach the end face of the end stacks (north or south ends) of the main rack

Control is defined as holding the fire in check through the extinguishing system until the commodities initially involved are consumed or until the fire is extinguished by the extinguishing system or manual aid.

The standard commodity as selected in the 20 ft (6.1 m) test series was used in the majority of tests for storage over 25 ft (7.6 m). Hallmark products and 3M products described in the 20 ft (6.1 m) test series report also were used as representative of Class III or Class IV commodities, or both, in several tests. The results of privately sponsored tests on Hallmark products and plastic encapsulated standard commodities also were made available to the committee.

A 25 ft (7.6 m) long test array was used for the majority of the tests for storage over 25 ft (7.6 m). The decision to use such an array was made because it was believed that a fire in racks over 25 ft (7.6 m) high that extended the full length of a 50 ft (15 m) long rack could not be considered controlled, particularly as storage heights increased.

One of the purposes of the tests was to determine arrangements of in-rack sprinklers that can be repeated as pile height increases and that provide control of the fire. The tests for storage height of 30 ft (9.1 m) explored the effect of such arrays. Many of these tests, however, produced appreciable fire spread in storage in tiers above the top level of protection within the racks. (In some cases, a total burnout of the top tiers of both the main rack and the target rack occurred.) In the case of the 30 ft (9.1 m) Hallmark Test 134 on the 60 ft (18 m) site, the material in the top tiers of storage burned vigorously, and the fire jumped the aisle above the fourth tier. The fire then burned downward into the south end of the fourth tier. In the test on the floor, a nominal 30 ft (9.1 m) clearance occurred between the top of storage and the ceiling sprinklers, whereas on the platform this clearance was reduced to nominal 10 ft (3.0 m). In most cases, the in-rack sprinklers were effective in controlling fire below the top level of protection within the racks. It has been assumed by the Test Planning Committee that in an actual case with a clearance of 10 ft (3.0 m) or less above storage, ceiling sprinklers would be expected to control damage above the top level of protection within the racks. Tests have been planned to investigate lesser clearances.

Tests 114 and 128 explore the effect of changing the ignition point from the in-rack standard ignition point to a face ignition location. It should be noted, however, that both of these tests were conducted with 30 ft (9.1 m) clearance from the ceiling sprinklers to the top of storage and, as such, ceiling sprinklers had little effect on the fire in the top two tiers of storage. Firespread in the three lower tiers is essentially the same. A similar change in the firespread where the ignition point is changed was noted in Tests 126 and 127. Once again, 30 ft (9.1 m) clearance occurred between the top of storage and the ceiling sprinklers, and, as such, the ceiling sprinklers had little effect on the face fire. Comparisons of Tests 129, 130, and 131 in the test series for storage height of 50 ft (15 m) indicate little effect of point of ignition in the particular configuration tested.

Test 125, when compared with Test 133, indicates no significant difference in result between approved low-profile sprinklers and standard sprinklers in the racks.

Table C.9 Summary of Relationship Between Sprinkler Discharge Density and the Extent of Fire Damage and Sprinkler Operation

Density [gpm/ft^2 (mm/min)]	Fire Damage in Test Array		Sprinkler Operation [165°F (74°C)] Area [ft^2 (m^2)]
	%	ft^2 (m^2)	
0.30 (12.2) (ceiling only)	22	395 (37)	4500–4800 (420–445)
0.375 (15.3) (ceiling only)	17	306 (24)	1800 (165)
0.45 (18.3) (ceiling only)	9	162 (15)	700 (65)
0.20 (8.2) (ceiling only)	28–36	504–648 (46–60)	13,100–14,000 (1215–1300)
0.20 (8.2) (sprinklers at ceiling and in racks)	8	144 (13)	4100 (380)
0.30 (12.2) (sprinklers at ceiling and in racks)	7	126 (12)	700 (65)

For SI units, 1 ft = 0.3048 m; °C = $\frac{5}{9}$ (°F − 32); 1 gpm/ft^2 = 40.746 mm/min.

C.10 [20.18.1]

Temperatures in the test column were maintained below 1000°F (538°C) with densities, of roof ceiling sprinklers only, of 0.375 gpm/ft^2 (15.3 mm/min) with 8 ft (2.4 m) aisles and 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min) with 4 ft (1.2 m) aisles using the standard commodity.

C.11 [20.19, 25.3.3.1]

Test 98 with solid shelves 24 ft (7.3 m) long and 7$\frac{1}{2}$ ft (2.3 m) deep at each level produced total destruction of the commodity in the main rack and jumped the aisle. Density was 0.3 gpm/ft^2 (12.2 mm/min) from the ceiling sprinklers only. Test 108 with shelves 24 ft (7.3 m) long and 3$\frac{1}{2}$ ft (1.0 m) deep and with a 6 in. (150 mm) longitudinal flue space and one level of sprinklers in the rack resulted in damage to most of the commodity in the main rack but did not jump the aisle. Density from ceiling sprinklers was 0.375 gpm/ft^2 (15.3 mm/min), and rack sprinklers discharged at 15 psi (1.0 bar).

These tests did not yield sufficient information to develop a comprehensive protection standard for solid shelf racks. Items such as increased ceiling density, use of bulkheads, other configurations of sprinklers in racks, and limitation of shelf length and depth should be considered.

Where such rack installations exist or are contemplated, the damage potential should be considered, and sound engineering judgment should be used in designing the protection system.

Test 98, with solid shelving obstructing both the longitudinal and transverse flue space, produced unsatisfactory results and indicates a need for sprinklers at each level in such a rack structure.

Test 147 was conducted with ceiling sprinklers only. Density was 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min) with a sprinkler spacing of 100 ft^2 (9 m^2). A total of 47 sprinklers opened, and 83 percent of the commodity was consumed. The fire jumped both aisles and spread to both ends of the main and target racks. The test was considered unsuccessful.

Test 148 was conducted with ceiling sprinklers and in-rack sprinklers. In-rack sprinklers were provided at each level (top of first, second, and third tiers) and were located in the longitudinal flue. They were directly above each other and 24 ft (7.3 m) on center or 22 ft (6.7 m) on each side of the ignition flue. Ceiling sprinkler discharge density was 0.375 gpm/ft^2 (15.3 mm/min). In-rack sprinkler discharge pressure was 30 psi (2.1 bar). A total of 46 ceiling sprinklers and three in-rack sprinklers opened, and 34 percent of the commodity was consumed. The fire consumed most of the material between the in-rack sprinklers and jumped both aisles.

C.12 [20.3.3]

Fire tests with open-top containers in the upper tier of storage and a portion of the third tier of storage produced an increase in sprinkler operation from 36 to 41 sprinklers and a more pronounced aisle jump and increase in firespread in the main array. The smooth underside of the containers closely approximates fire behavior of slave pallets.

C.13 [20.6.2.1.1]

Test 80 was conducted to determine the effect of closing back-to-back longitudinal 6 in. (150 mm) flue spaces in conventional pallet racks. Test results indicated fewer sprinklers operating than with the flue space open, and, as such, no minimum back-to-back clearance is necessary if the transverse flue space is kept open.

Tests 145 and 146 were conducted to investigate the influence of longitudinal and transverse flue dimensions in double-row racks without solid shelves. Results were compared with Tests 65 and 66. Flue dimensions in Tests 65, 66, 145, and 146 were 6 in. (150 mm), 6 in. (150 mm), 3 in. (75 mm), and 12 in. (300 mm), respectively. All other conditions were the same.

In Tests 65, 66, 45, and 48, sprinklers operated compared with Tests 59 and 58 for Tests 145 and 146, respectively. Fire damage in Tests 145 and 146 was somewhat less than in Tests 65 and 66; 2100 ft^3 (59 m^3) and 1800 ft^3 (51 m^3) in Tests 145 and 146, respectively, versus 2300 ft^3 (65 m^3) and 2300 ft^3 (65 m^3) in Tests 65 and 66, respectively, of combustible material were consumed.

Test results indicate narrow flue spaces of about 3 in. (75 mm) allow reasonable passage of sprinkler water down through the racks.

Tests 96 and 107, on multiple-row racks, used 6 in. (150 mm) transverse flue spaces. The water demand recommended in the standard is limited to those cases with nominal 6 in. (150 mm) transverse flues in vertical alignment.

C.14 [21.4.1.1]

Tests 65 and 66, compared with Test 69, and Test 93, compared with Test 94, indicated a reduction in areas of application of 44.5 percent and 45.5 percent, respectively, with high-temperature-rated sprinklers as compared with ordinary-temperature-rated sprinklers. Other extensive Factory Mutual tests produced an average reduction of 40 percent. Design curves are based on this area reduction. In constructing the design curves, the high-temperature curves above 3600 ft^2 (335 m^2) of application, therefore, represent 40 percent reductions in area of application of the ordinary-temperature curves in the 6000 ft^2 to 10,000 ft^2 (555 m^2 to 930 m^2) range.

Test 84 indicated the number of intermediate-temperature-rated sprinklers operating is essentially the same as ordinary-temperature-rated sprinklers.

C.15 [21.4.1.2.3 and 25.4.2.2.2.1(B)]

Tests were not conducted with aisles wider than 8 ft (2.4 m) or narrower than 4 ft (1.2 m). It is, therefore, not possible to determine whether lower ceiling densities should be used for aisle widths greater than 8 ft (2.4 m) or if higher densities should be used for aisle widths less than 4 ft (1.2 m).

C.16 [25.1.8.3.2]

In one 20 ft (6.1 m) high test, sprinklers were buried in the flue space 1 ft (300 mm) above the bottom of the pallet load, and results were satisfactory. Coverage of aisles by in-rack sprinklers is, therefore, not necessary, and distribution across the tops of pallet loads at any level is not necessary for the occupancy classes tested.

C.17 [25.1.7.7]

In all tests with in-rack sprinklers, obstructions measuring 3 in. × 3 ft (75 mm × 900 mm) were introduced on each side of the sprinkler approximately 3 in. (75 mm) from the sprinkler to simulate rack structure member obstruction. This obstruction had no effect on sprinkler performance in the 20 ft (6.1 m) high tests.

Tests 103, 104, 105, and 109 in the 30 ft (9.1 m) high test with in-rack sprinklers obstructed by rack uprights produced unsatisfactory results. Tests 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, and 120 in the 30 ft (9.1 m) high test series with in-rack sprinklers located a minimum of 2 ft (600 mm) from rack uprights produced improved results.

C.18 [25.3.1.1]

In all except one case, using the standard commodity with one line of sprinklers installed in racks, only two sprinklers opened. In the one exception, two sprinklers opened in the main rack, and two sprinklers opened in the target rack.

C.19 [25.3.1.1]

Operating pressures were 15 psi (1.0 bar) on all tests of sprinklers in racks with storage 20 ft (6.1 m) high and 30 psi (2.1 bar) for storage 30 ft (9.1 m) and 50 ft (15 m) high.

Tests 112 and 124 were conducted to compare the effect of increasing sprinkler discharge pressure at in-rack sprinklers from 30 psi to 75 psi (2.1 bar to 5.2 bar). With the higher discharge pressure, the fire did not jump the aisle, and damage below the top level of protection within the racks was somewhat better controlled by the higher discharge pressure of the in-rack sprinklers. A pressure of 15 psi (1 bar) was maintained on in-rack sprinklers in the first 30 ft (9.1 m) high tests (Tests 103 and 104). Pressure on in-rack sprinklers in subsequent tests was 30 psi (2.1 bar), except in Test 124, where it was 75 psi (5.2 bar).

C.20 [20.5.3.2]

A full-scale test program was conducted with various double-row rack storage arrangements of a cartoned Group A nonexpanded plastic commodity at the Factory Mutual Research Corporation (FMRC) test facility. The series of nine tests included several variations, one of which involved the use of the following four distinct shelving arrangements: slatted wood, solid wood, wire mesh, and no shelving. The results of the testing program, specifically Tests 1, 2, 3, and 5, clearly demonstrate the acceptable performance of sprinkler systems protecting storage configurations that involve the use of slated shelving as described in 26.4.1. As a result of the test program, Factory Mutual has amended FM Loss Prevention Data Sheet 8-9 to allow slatted shelving to be protected in the same manner as an open rack arrangement.

Complete details of the test program are documented in the FMRC technical report FMRC J. I. 0X1R0.RR, “Large-Scale Fire Tests of Rack Storage Group A Plastics in Retail Operation Scenarios Protected by Extra Large Orifice (ELO) Sprinklers.”

C.21 [20.4.8 and 21.5.1]

In the RSP rack storage test series as well as the stored plastics program palletized test series, compartmented 16 oz (1.1 bar) polystyrene jars were found to produce significantly higher protection requirements than the same commodity in a nested configuration. Polystyrene glasses and expanded polystyrene plates were comparable to the nested jars.

Different storage configurations within cartons or different products of the same basic plastic might, therefore, require reduced protection requirements.

In Test RSP-7, with nominal 15 ft (4.6 m) high storage with compartmented jars, a 0.6 gpm/ft^2 (24.5 mm/min) density, 8 ft (2.4 m) aisles, and a 10 ft (3.0 m) clearance to ceiling, 29 sprinklers opened. In Tests RSP-4 with polystyrene glasses, RSP-5 with expanded polystyrene plates, and RSP-16 with nested polystyrene jars all stored at nominal 15 ft (4.6 m) height, 10 ft (3.1 m) clearance to ceiling, 8 ft (2.4 m) aisles, and 0.6 gpm/ft^2 (24.5 mm/min) density, only four sprinklers opened.

However, Test RSP-11, with expanded polystyrene plates and 6 ft (1.8 m) aisles, demonstrated an increase in the number of operating sprinklers to 29. Test RSP-10 with expanded polystyrene plates, nominally 15 ft (4.6 m) high with a 10 ft (3.1 m) clearance and 8 ft (2.4 m) aisles, but protected only by 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min) density, opened 46 sprinklers and burned 100 percent of the plastic commodity.

At a nominal 20 ft (6.1 m) storage height with 8 ft (2.4 m) aisles, a 3 ft (900 mm) clearance to ceiling, and a 0.6 gpm/ft^2 (24.5 mm/min) density opened four sprinklers with polystyrene glasses in Test RSP-2 and 11 sprinklers with expanded polystyrene plates in Test RSP-6. In Test RSP-8, however, with the clearance to ceiling increased to 10 ft (3.1 m) and other variables held constant, 51 sprinklers opened, and 100 percent of the plastic commodity burned.

Test RSP-3, with polystyrene glasses at a nominal height of 25 ft (7.6 m) with a 3 ft (900 mm) clearance to ceiling, 8 ft (2.4 m) aisles, and 0.6 gpm/ft^2 (24.5 mm/min) ceiling sprinkler density in combination with one level of in-rack sprinklers, resulted in four ceiling sprinklers and two in-rack sprinklers operating. Test RSP-9, with the same configuration but with polystyrene plates, opened 12 ceiling sprinklers and three in-rack sprinklers.

No tests were conducted with compartmented polystyrene jars at storage heights in excess of a nominal 15 ft (4.6 m) as a part of this program.

C.22 [21.5.1.1]

The protection of Group A plastics by extra large orifice (ELO) sprinklers designed to provide 0.6 gpm/ft^2/2000 ft^2 (24.5 mm/min/185 m^2) or 0.45 gpm/ft^2/2000 ft^2 (18.3 mm/min/186 m^2) without the installation of in-rack sprinklers was developed from full-scale testing conducted with various double-row rack storage arrangements of a cartoned Group A nonexpanded plastic commodity at the Factory Mutual Research Corporation (FMRC) test facility. The results of this test program are documented in the FMRC technical report, FMRC J.I. 0X1R0.RR, "Large-Scale Fire Tests of Rack Stored Group A Plastics in Retail Operation Scenarios Protected by Extra Large Orifice (ELO) Sprinklers." The test program was initiated to address the fire protection issues presented by warehouse-type retail stores with regard to the display and storage of Group A plastic commodities including, but not limited to, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene copolymer (ABS) piping, polyvinyl chloride (PVC) hose and hose racks, tool boxes, polypropylene trash and storage containers, and patio furniture. Tests 1 and 2 of this series included protection of the Group A plastic commodity stored to 20 ft (6.1 m) under a 27 ft (8.2 m) ceiling by a design density of 0.6 gpm/ft^2 (24.5 mm/min) utilizing ELO sprinklers. The results of the testing program clearly demonstrate the acceptable performance of sprinkler systems that protect storage configurations involving Group A plastics up to 20 ft (6.1 m) in height under a 27 ft (8.2 m) ceiling where using ELO sprinklers to deliver a design density of 0.6 gpm/ft^2 (24.5 mm/min) and Group A plastics up to 14 ft (4.2 m) in height under a 22 ft (6.7 m) ceiling where using ELO sprinklers to deliver a design density of 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min). The tabulation of the pertinent tests shown in Table C.22 demonstrates acceptable performance.

Table C.22 Summary of Test Results for Plastic Commodities Using $^5/_8$ in. (15.9 mm) Orifice Sprinklers

	Date of Test						
Test Parameters	**8/20/93**	**8/25/93**	**9/2/93**	**10/7/93**	**2/17/94**	**2/25/94**	**4/27/94**
Type of shelving	Slatted wood	Slatted wood	Slatted wood	Slatted wood	Slatted wood	Slatted wood	Wire mesh
Other conditions/inclusions	—	—	—	—	Draft curtains	Draft curtains	—
Storage height (ft-in.)	19-11	19-11	15-4	15-4	19-11	19-11	13-11
Number of tiers	6[a]	6[a]	5[b]	5[b]	6[a]	6[b]	3
Clearance to ceiling/ sprinklers (ft-in.)	6-10/6-3	6-10/6-3	11-5/10-10	11-5/10-10	6-10/6-3	6-10/6-3	8-4/7-9
Longitudinal/transverse flues (in.)	6/6 to 7½	6/6 to 7½	6/6 to 7	6/6 to 7½	6/6 to 7½	6/6 to 7½	6/3[c]
Aisle width (ft)	7½	7½	7½	7½	7½	7½	7½
Ignition centered below (number of sprinklers)	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
Sprinkler orifice size (in.)	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64
Sprinkler temperature rating (°F)	165	286	286	165	165	286	286
Sprinkler RTI (ft-sec)$^{1/2}$	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Sprinkler spacing (ft × ft)	8 × 10	8 × 10	8 × 10	8 × 10	8 × 10	8 × 10	10 × 10
Sprinkler identification	ELO-231	ELO-231	ELO-231	ELO-231	ELO-231	ELO-231	ELO-231
Constant water pressure (psi)	19	19	19	19	19	19	15.5
Minimum density (gpm/ft^2)	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.45
Test Results							
First sprinkler operation (min:sec)	2:03	2:25	1:12	0:44	1:25	0:52	0:49

Test Parameters	Date of Test						
	8/20/93	8/25/93	9/2/93	10/7/93	2/17/94	2/25/94	4/27/94
Last sprinkler operation (min:sec)	2:12	15:19	6:34	7:34	15:54	14:08	10:58
Total sprinklers opened	4	9	7	13	35	18	12
Total sprinkler discharge (gpm)	205	450	363	613	1651	945	600
Average discharge per sprinkler (gpm)	51	50	52	47	47	52	50
Peak/maximum 1-min average gas temperature (°F)	1107/566	1412/868	965/308	662/184	1575/883	1162/767	1464/895
Peak/maximum 1-min average steel temperature (°F)	185/172	197/196	233/232	146/145	226/225	255/254	502/500
Peak/maximum 1-min average plume velocity (ft/sec)	27/15	25/18	18/15[d]	14/10[d]	26/23	20/18[d]	33/20
Peak/maximum 1-min heat flux (Btu/ft^2/sec)	0.6/0.5	2.0/1.9	2.8/2.5	1.1/0.8	1.0/0.9	4.8/3.0	1.6/1.4
Aisle jump, east/west target ignition (min:sec)	None	8:24/None	5:35/10:10	None	None	[e]/8:18	[e]/None
Equivalent number of pallet loads consumed	3	9	6	5	12	13	12
Test duration (min)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Results acceptable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No[f]	No[g]	Yes

For SI units, 1 ft = 0.305 m; 1 in. = 25.4 mm; °F = (1.8 ×°C) + 32; °C = (°F − 32)/1.8; 1 psi = 0.069 bar; 1 gpm = 3.8 L/min; 1 ft/sec = 0.31 m/sec; 1 gpm/ft^2 = 40.746 mm/min.

[a]Main (ignition) racks divided into five or six tiers; bottom tiers each approximately 2 ft (600 mm) high and upper tiers each about 5 ft (1.5 m) high; wood shelving below commodity at second through fifth tiers.

[b]Main (ignition) racks divided into five or six tiers; bottom tiers each approximately 2 ft (600 mm) high and upper tiers each about 5 ft (1.5 m) high; wood shelving below commodity at second through fifth tiers; wire mesh shelving below commodity at sixth tier or below fifth (top) tier commodity.

[c]Transverse flues spaced 8 ft (2.4 m) apart [versus 3½ ft (1.1 m) apart in all other tests].

[d]Instrumentation located 5 ft (1.5 m) north of ignition.

[e]Minor surface damage to cartons.

[f]High water demand.

[g]Excessive firespread; marginally high water demand.

C.23 [25.4.3.1.1.1 and 25.4.3.2.1.1]

The recommended use of ordinary-temperature-rated sprinklers at ceiling for storage higher than 25 ft (7.6 m) was determined by the results of fire test data. A test with high-temperature-rated sprinklers and 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min) density resulted in fire damage in the two top tiers just within acceptable limits, with three ceiling sprinklers operating. A test with 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min) density and ordinary-temperature-rated sprinklers produced a dramatic reduction in fire damage with four ceiling sprinklers operating.

The four ordinary-temperature-rated ceiling sprinklers operated before the first of the three high-temperature-rated ceiling sprinklers. In both tests, two in-rack sprinklers at two levels operated at approximately the same time. The high-temperature-rated sprinklers were at all times fighting a larger fire with less water than the ordinary-temperature-rated ceiling sprinklers.

Tests 115 and 119 compare ceiling sprinkler density of 0.3 gpm/ft^2 (12.2 mm/min) with 0.45 gpm/ft^2 (18.3 mm/min). Damage patterns coupled with the number of boxes damaged in the main rack suggest that the increase in density produces improved control, particularly in the area above the top tier of in-rack sprinklers.

Tests 119 and 122 compare ceiling sprinkler temperature ratings of 286°F (141°C) and 165°F (74°C). A review of the number of boxes damaged and the firespread patterns indicates that the use of ordinary-temperature-rated ceiling sprinklers on a rack configuration that incorporates in-rack sprinklers dramatically reduces the amount of firespread. Considering that in-rack sprinklers in the tests for storage over 25 ft (7.6 m) operated prior to ceiling sprinklers, it would seem that the installation of in-rack sprinklers converts an otherwise rapidly developing fire, from the standpoint of ceiling sprinklers, to a slower developing fire with a lower rate of heat release.

In the 20 ft (6.1 m) high test series, ceiling sprinklers operated before in-rack sprinklers. In the 30 ft (9.1 m) high series, ceiling sprinklers operated after in-rack sprinklers. The 50 ft (15 m) high test did not operate ceiling sprinklers. Ceiling sprinklers would, however, be needed if fire occurred in upper levels.

The results of these tests indicate the effect of in-rack sprinklers on storage higher than 25 ft (7.6 m). From the ceiling sprinkler operation standpoint, a fire with an expected high heat release rate was converted to a fire with a much lower heat release rate.

Since the fires developed slowly and opened sprinklers at two levels in the racks, only a few ceiling sprinklers were needed to establish control. Thus, the sprinkler operating area does not vary with height for storage over 25 ft (7.6 m) or for changes in sprinkler temperature rating and density.

All tests with sprinklers in racks were conducted using nominal $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (15 mm) orifice size sprinklers of ordinary temperature.

C.24 [26.7]

A series of fire tests were conducted by Spacesaver Corporation that indicated control was achieved with light hazard sprinkler spacing and design. The tests used quick-response, ordinary-temperature sprinklers on 15 ft × 15 ft (4.6 m × 4.6 m) spacing with an 8 ft (2.4 m) high compact storage unit located in the middle of the sprinkler array. Results indicated a classic definition of control, the fire was held in check within the compact storage module and the fire did not jump the aisle or ignite any of the target arrays.

C.25 [26.6]

In July and August of 2007, a series of three large-scale fire tests were conducted at Southwest Research Institute to investigate the effectiveness of a specific ceiling and in-rack sprinkler protection scheme dedicated for the protection of paper files in 12 in. (300 mm) wide and 16 in. (400 mm) and 10 in. (250 mm) high corrugated cardboard boxes (containers) maintained in multiple-row racks to a nominal height of 37 ft (11 m).

The storage rack for the main array in all three tests consisted of two 50 in. (1250 mm) deep racks placed back-to-back and separated by a 2 in. (50 mm) gap. The storage rack for the target array in all three tests consisted of a single 50 in. (1250 mm) deep rack separated on both sides of the main array by a 30 in. (750 mm) wide aisle. Rack uprights were a nominal 3 in. (75 mm) wide. Rack bays were 120 in. (3000 mm) wide, 38 in. (950 mm) high, and equipped with perforated metal decking having a minimum of 50 percent openings. Each storage bay was provided with nine containers between uprights that was three containers deep and three containers high for a total of 81 containers per rack bay. Nominal 6 in. (150 mm) wide transverse flue spaces were provided at each rack upright. Both the main array and the target array were four bays long for an overall length of 41 ft 3 in. (13 m).

Open-grated (expanded) catwalks were provided in both storage aisles at the top of the third [9 ft 8 in. (2.9 m)], sixth [19 ft 2 in. (5.8 m)], and ninth [28 ft 8 in. (8.7 m)] tier levels.

The ceiling sprinkler system consisted of K-8.0 (K-115), 165°F (74°C) nominally rated, standard-response pendent automatic sprinklers installed on 10 ft × 10 ft (3.0 m × 3.0 m) spacing arranged to provide a constant 0.30 gpm/ft^2 (12.2 mm/min) density. A nominal 3 ft (900 mm) clearance was provided between the top of storage and the ceiling sprinklers.

The in-rack sprinkler system consisted of K-8.0 (K-115), 165°F (74°C) nominally rated, quick-response upright automatic sprinklers that were equipped with water shields and arranged to provide a constant 30 gpm (115 L/min) flow from each operating in-rack sprinkler. In-rack sprinklers were provided within the transverse flue spaces of the main array, 2 ft (600 mm) horizontally from the face of the rack, at the top of the third and ninth tier levels on one side of the main array and at the top of the sixth tier level on the other side of the main array. A minimum 6 in. (150 mm) vertical clearance was provided between the in-rack sprinkler and the top of storage within the storage rack.

The same type of sprinklers installed within the storage racks were also installed under each catwalk and designed to provide a constant 30 gpm (115 L/min) flow from each operating sprinkler. These sprinklers were centered within the aisles and installed 10 ft 3 in. (3.1 m) on line. They were arranged to be aligned with the adjacent transverse flue space when the flue space was not equipped with an in-rack sprinkler; they were positioned halfway between transverse flue spaces when the adjacent flue spaces were equipped with in-rack sprinklers.

In Test No. 1, ignition was at grade level at the face of the rack and centered between rack uprights. The in-rack sprinklers within the transverse flue spaces nearest to the ignition location were at the top of the sixth tier level; the sprinkler under the catwalk at the top of the sixth tier level was located a horizontal distance of 15 in. (375 mm) away from the ignition location. The sprinkler under the catwalk at the top of the sixth tier level was the first sprinkler to operate at a time 2 minutes and 49 seconds after ignition. A total of 3 in-rack sprinklers and 1 catwalk sprinkler operated during this test; no ceiling-level sprinklers operated. The results of the test were considered acceptable.

In Test No. 2, ignition was at grade level at a rack upright, 2 ft (600 mm) horizontally from the rack face. The in-rack sprinkler within the transverse flue space of fire origin was at the top of the sixth tier level. The in-rack sprinkler directly over the ignition location was the first sprinkler to operate at a time 2 minutes and 9 seconds after ignition. A total of 2 in-rack sprinklers operated during this test; no ceiling-level sprinklers operated. The results of the test were considered acceptable.

In Test No. 3, ignition was at grade level, centered between rack uprights within the 2 in. (50 mm) gap. To allow vertical fire growth directly above the point of ignition, the gap was maintained open throughout the height of the storage rack. A total of four in-rack sprinklers and one sprinkler under a catwalk operated during the test; no ceiling-level sprinklers operated. The first in-rack sprinkler to operate was located at the top of the sixth tier level at a time 3 minutes and 1 second after ignition. The second in-rack sprinkler to operate was also at the top of the sixth tier level. The last two in-rack sprinklers to operate were both located at the top of the third tier level. The fifth and final sprinkler to operate was a sprinkler located under a catwalk at the top of the third tier level. The results of the test were considered acceptable.

All three tests were considered successful and confirmed that the ceiling and in-rack sprinkler protection scheme outlined in this standard for the protection of cartoned records storage maintained in multiple-row racks with catwalk access is acceptable.

C.26 [20.6.3]

During full-scale fire tests, flue space width and alignment are typically set with care for test consistency and repeatability. Some full-scale fire tests and fire experience have shown sprinkler protection designed and installed in accordance with this standard are able to tolerate random variations in flue width and vertical flue alignment. For example, see Test 7 in the National Quick Response Sprinkler Research Project: *Large-Scale Test Evaluation of Early Suppression Fast-Response (ESFR) Automatic Sprinklers* (report available from the NFPA Research Foundation website). For Test 7, transverse flue variations were substantial such that some flues at various tiers were completely closed (i.e., pallet loads placed immediately adjacent to each other), and the vertical alignment of one transverse flue was completely disrupted. The result was the operation of eight K-14 (K-200) ESFR sprinklers as well as minor aisle jump to both target racks. Reported damage was $2\frac{1}{2}$ pallet loads in the main rack array and $\frac{1}{4}$ pallet load in the large racks. Findings such as Test 7 support the toleration of flue variations in the real world. However, ideally pallet loads should be positioned in racks with care to reduce the challenge faced by sprinklers should a fire occur.

C.27 [19.2.3.2.5]

Publicly available large-scale fire testing for simulated Ordinary Hazard Group 1 and Group 2 type occupancies were used to establish the requirements of 19.2.3.2.5 and are available in the following two documents:

(1) Nam, Soonil; Antonio Braga; Hsiang-Cheng Kung; and Joan M. A. Troup, “Fire Protection for Non-Storage Occupancies with High Ceiling Clearances,” Fire Safety Science — Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium, International Association for Fire Safety Science, 2002, pp. 493–504. www.iafss.org/publications/fss/7/493/view/fss_7-493.pdf
(2) Nam, S., “Fire Protection at High Ceiling Clearance Facilities,” International Association for Fire Safety Science, 2007. www.iafss.org/publications/aofst/7/84/view/aofst_7-84.pdf

Table C.27 summarizes selected data from these reports. There are also additional tests reported in the 2014 Suppression Detection conference proceedings available from the NFPA Library.

Table C.27 Large-Scale Test Data for High Ceilings over Non-Storage Occupancies

Test No.	Test Sponsored By	Research Report Date and Test Number	Test Commodity	Storage Height		Aisle Width Between Main and Target Arrays ft (m)	Occupancy Hazard Classification	Ceiling Height		Sprinkler K-Factor	Sprinkl Temperat Ratin	
				ft	(m)			ft	(m)		ºF	
1	FM Global	2002 Test 2 and 2007 Test 1	Class II	~8	2.3	DNA	OH 1	58	17.7	K-5.6 (K-80)	165	
2	FM Global	2002 Test 1 and 2007 Test 2	Class II	~8	2.3	DNA	OH 1	58	17.7	K-8.0 (K-115)	165	
3	FM Global	2007 Test 3	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	DNA	OH 2	60	18.3	K-8.0 (K-115)	165	

Test No.	Test Sponsored By	Research Report Date and Test Number	Test Commodity	Storage Height		Aisle Width Between Main and Target Arrays ft (m)	Occupancy Hazard Classification	Ceiling Height		Sprinkler K-Factor	Sprinkl Temperat Rating	
				ft	(m)			ft	(m)		ºF	
4	FM Global	2007 Test 4	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	DNA	OH 2	60	18.3	K-8.0 (K-115)	165	
5	FM Global	2002 Test 3 and 2007 Test 5	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	5 (1.5)	OH 2	58	17.7	K-8.0 (K-115)	165	
6	FM Global	2002 Test 4 and 2007 Test 6	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	5 (1.5)	OH 2	60	18.3	K-11.2 (K-160)	155	
7	FM Global	2007 Test 7	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	5 (1.5)	OH 2	60	18.3	K-11.2 (K-160)	155	
8	FM Global	2002 Test 5	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	5 (1.5)	OH 2	60	18.3	K-25.2EC (K-360EC)	165	
9	FM Global	2010 Test 3	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	DNA	OH2	30	9.1	K-11.2EC (K-160EC)	155	
10	FM Global	2010 Test 5	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	DNA	OH2	30	9.1	K-14.0EC (K-200EC)	155	
11	FM Global	2010 Test 9	Cartoned nonexpanded Group A Plastics	~6	1.8	DNA	OH2	45	13.7	K-5.6 (K-80)	155	

Note: The commodity classification and heights are representative of the fire load present in the specific occupancies noted in the table and are not indicative of high- or low-piled storage.