

# Inside THE Diamond

Amerex

WINTER/SPRING 2022

## Navigating the supply chain **CRUNCH**

*Facing unprecedented challenges  
to meet consumer demands*

## BLAZING THE WAY FORWARD

*Meet the women  
revolutionizing  
fire suppression*



Quality is Behind the Diamond

## A Letter from Harrison Bishop



**HARRISON BISHOP**  
PRESIDENT

One thing that sets the fire protection industry apart from others is the people who dedicate their lives to it. While we each have distinct roles, skill sets and perspectives, we share a common goal of protecting our communities. We are a welcoming and inclusive group with a future filled with possibilities.

Look no further than the growing percentage of women in the industry to see how this holds true. In this issue of *Inside the Diamond*, we feature several of the many women making an impact on our trade (page 10). Some entered the business because it runs in their blood, while others stumbled upon fire

suppression quite by accident. No matter how they arrived, they each have an unwavering commitment to our shared work and the future of our industry.

At Amerex, we are thankful for the contributions the talented women on our team have made to our business and community. Executive Women International (EWI) honored Amerex with a national award for Outstanding Member Firm (page 5). We were also proud to be selected as Alabama's Large Manufacturer of the Year (page 5). We share these honors with our customers and have used them as inspiration to spur continued growth and innovation.

Supply chain challenges have appeared in all areas of the economy. Amerex has not been immune to these issues and we have been extremely diligent and thoughtful about sourcing during the pandemic. On page 6, we give you an inside view into how Amerex continues to navigate supply chain challenges as well as managing sourcing and inventory to prepare for the future.

Innovation is also a continued focus. On page 9, learn more about our new battery-electric gas detection system, the first of its kind that can forewarn a thermal runaway event. We are also introducing a number of exciting new Kitchen Protection products (page 20).

The Amerex team has our sights set on the upcoming NAFED conferences. We enjoy the chance to visit with you

and share information. One of the reasons that NAFED is as vibrant and vital as it is today is the dedication of one extraordinary individual: Norb Makowka. Norb was a bright light in our business, serving on countless NFPA technical committees and as an invaluable source of information. As much as he was revered for his experience and knowledge, he was admired more for being a great man. While there's no question of how much Norb will be missed at this year's conferences, the extraordinary people of the fire suppression industry will continue to advance his work and vision.

Look for emails and stay tuned to our social media accounts for more information about our NAFED booth and special events. We hope to see you there!

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Industry News.....	5
Navigating the Supply Chain Crunch.....	6–8
Employee Spotlight: Mike Powell.....	8
Innovating Fire Suppression for Battery-Electric Vehicles.....	9
Blazing the Way Forward: Women in Fire Suppression.....	10–17
On The Road Again: Returning to Trade Shows.....	18
Amerex 2022 Events Calendar.....	19
Product Updates.....	20–22
2022 Fire Extinguisher Updates.....	23





## KP 250 Agent Cylinder

Save valuable time on the job with this new 8" diameter shell that boasts 7 flow points and an allowed 24" discharge hose that connects from the tank valve to the supply piping.

## KP 475 Manifold Distribution Piping

Discover the cost-efficient installation advantage of this new piping for the two KP475 tanks that delivers 28 flow numbers in one piping network.

## New Salamander Broiler Coverage

Now you can take advantage of the widest outboard coverage in the industry by protecting the biggest broiler with much less piping.

## Conduit Offset Gas Valve Installation (P/N 12507)

Eliminate the need for two corner pulleys with this new capability that can be installed at the gas valve as well as the MRM or PRM.

## Newly Designed Class K Fire Extinguisher

Avoid hazardous risks with the superior firefighting capacity of the easier-to-use-and-install Class K fire extinguisher.

New solutions give you  
a **competitive** advantage.

Visit [amerex-fire.com](http://amerex-fire.com) to learn more.



# INDUSTRY NEWS

## AMEREX NAMED ALABAMA LARGE MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

As one of many leading manufacturing companies whose products are #MadeInAlabama, Amerex is proud to be named the 2021 Alabama Large Manufacturer of the Year by the Business Council of Alabama and Alabama Technology Network. Awarded in October, this annual



**ABOVE:** Pictured from left to right are Ben Pitts, VP – Sales & Marketing; Jay Ghelani, VP of Operations; Robert Fisher, Health & Safety Manager; Andy Payant, CFO; Eric Reed, Controller; Jacy Whitaker, HR Director; Harrison Bishop, President and CEO; Susan Ray, Marketing Manager; Jeff Layfield, Senior Production Manager

statewide honor is selected by a group of independent judges to celebrate Alabama’s top small, medium, large and emerging manufacturers. Winners were chosen for their excellence in the areas of customer focus, employee commitment, operating excellence, continuous improvement, profitable growth and investing in training and retraining. With Amerex’s emphasis on quality, service and innovation, it is gratifying to receive external affirmation that our team’s efforts each day meaningfully ensure that quality is behind the diamond.

“This great honor is the culmination of 50 years of team member dedication and investment in our business,” said Harrison Bishop, executive vice president, McWane Fabricated Metals Group, and president, Amerex. “The Amerex team will use this recognition as inspiration to spur future growth and improvement in our industry. Along with McWane, our fellow nominees and other Alabama manufacturers, we want to continue moving Alabama manufacturing forward to highlight innovation and excellence throughout the state.” The future of manufacturing in Alabama is as bright as ever, and Amerex is proud to be one of many beacons of excellence shining across the state.

**Congratulations to the entire Amerex team!**

## AMEREX RECEIVES OUTSTANDING FIRM AWARD

We were honored to receive the Outstanding Firm Award from Executive Women’s International (EWI) for our EWI leadership and philanthropic commitments at this year’s annual national conference. Thank you to Linda Courtner, Credit Manager; Jacy Whitaker, PHR, MSHRM, Human Resources Director; and Gidget Yeager, Executive Assistant and Sales Administrator, for representing Amerex and for their EWI leadership and service.

**RIGHT:** Linda Courtner (center) Gidget Yeager (right) accept award for Amerex.



## NAVIGATING THE SUPPLY CHAIN

# CRUNCH



**B**y now, pervasive signs of the global supply chain crunch have surrounded us for nearly two years: empty store shelves, delayed or canceled orders from e-commerce retailers and “one per customer” signs by packs of toilet paper. These challenges became most noticeable for average consumers around the holidays, but for Amerex Supply Chain Manager Billy McMichael, they’ve been a daily concern since January 2021.

Billy and his team have grappled with unprecedented supply chain challenges regularly for more than a year. These challenges have wreaked havoc on virtually every industry, but Billy and his team have managed to avoid disruptions to the manufacturing of lifesaving Amerex products. We spoke with Billy to learn more about these issues and how Amerex has effectively resolved them through hard work, collaboration and innovation.

Most of the impact of the global supply chain logjam has been felt in upstream

inputs for Amerex products, which have been impacted by raw material shortages, labor shortages, unusual weather events, shipping bottlenecks, unpredictable spikes in demand, changes to trade regulations and the many far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These factors have been unavoidable across industries and, in many instances and compounded one another. Billy said, “This has been universal. The big three – labor, transportation and raw materials – have impacted everybody. We have been impacted as much as or more than many companies that are our size or larger. We started seeing major shortages in our raw materials and supplies in early January 2021, and we did not get a lot of warning. I have been with McWane and Amerex for 34 years and in supply chain management for that entire time, and in those 34 years I have never seen anything that compares to late 2020 and 2021.”



**LEFT:** Pictured from top to bottom are Carolyn Nolin and Diane McGee; Mike Krumptinger and Don Rollins; Casey Dunn and Chris Thomas

“We’re seeing every factor at play,” said Billy. “Both domestic and international shipping have slowed. We have seen interruptions to availability of container shipments for international shipping. Lead times for imports jumped from four weeks to 10+ weeks initially, and continue to be problematic. When we started seeing issues with international supply chain disruptions, we positioned ourselves with additional storage capacity and inventory to be able to absorb those increasing lead times because of the continued fluctuations.”

Beyond shipping slowdowns, labor shortages have contributed to the crunch. “We have experienced shortages with the common items you’ve heard about in the news related to steel and brass,” Billy continued. “Steel availability in the USA was greatly affected by labor shortages. They could not meet world demand, and steel is a key component for our extinguishers.”

Amerex’s challenges haven’t been limited to reduced availability of materials, labor and shipping. Supply chain difficulties have also arisen from international trade disputes. “We’ve had to make some critical sourcing adjustments due to import duties placed on some of our raw products. For instance, in January of last year, one of our key raw materials disappeared, and the price tripled in about a week.”

Weather has also been a factor. Billy explained, “We had those record cold and snow events earlier this year, causing temporary shutdowns



**ABOVE:** Pictured from left to right are Casey Dunn, Billy McMichael, Carolyn Nolin, Diane McGee, Mike Krumptinger and Chris Doss

for those supply chains. There were transportation issues with material sitting in warehouses that we could not get due to road closures.” Amerex has avoided disruptive

**“THE ENTIRE AMEREX TEAM HAS BEEN INCREDIBLE, AND WE’VE WORKED WITH QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENGINEERING TO MAKE SURE WE’RE NOT SACRIFICING QUALITY.”**

work stoppages due to upstream supply chain difficulties through a mix of diligent planning and interdepartmental cooperation. Billy noted, “It has been an entire team effort to accomplish this, from our company president to our building and land teams.”

Challenges of the magnitude seen in today’s supply chain world are solved only through teamwork. “The entire Amerex team has been incredible, and we’ve worked with quality assurance and engineering to make sure we’re not sacrificing quality. Our inventory control and procurement departments worked in tandem to help us increase and manage inventory levels for things like the valves and hoses without any production flow interruptions. Those departments have been rock stars in helping us navigate both domestic and global supply chain challenges,” Billy added. “We’re a large manufacturing company with 400+ employees, and I am proud that we have not lost a single day’s production. There are Fortune 500

companies that can't say that, but Amerex can. We have not interrupted production for one day directly related to supply chain issues. Don't get me wrong, we have come very close! But we haven't had to, and it's a testament to the entire team and the culture at Amerex: doing what has to be done to ensure that lifesaving products continued to flow."

Looking ahead to 2022, improvements to the current situation will be incremental, with some setbacks still expected. Billy observed, "Improvements are sectionalized. International shipping continues to erode. While we have seen improvements in some components such as steel and other alloys, there are still disruptions and cost

increases affecting several other raw material components."

As we all continue to navigate these challenges, we encourage Amerex customers to speak with their sales representatives about anticipated product needs as early as possible. 

# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

## MIKE POWELL

National Accounts Sales Director



Amerex team welcomes our new National Accounts Sales Director, Mike Powell. Mike will work with national accounts, partnering with both the customer's executive team and Amerex associates. Mike has been in sales and distribution his entire career where he has been fortunate enough to work with companies that provide high quality products and services. He has worked across the development spectrum, from early, high-growth stages to more mature market segments.

"Mike is a proven sales and business leader with more than two decades of experience in regional and national sales," says Ben Pitts, Vice President – Sales and Marketing. "I am very confident that Mike will be a great fit for this position and Amerex overall."

When asked what drew him to Amerex, Mike says, "I look at this job change like an investment. Amerex checked every box of my criteria: Do we have a durable competitive advantage? Does the company live values that reflect my own—integrity,

transparency and drive? And, will the work be fulfilling and fun?"

His decision to join Amerex has been confirmed at every turn. He's acutely aware of how much he has to learn and looks forward to working with everyone to bring together a national sales strategy.

Mike met his wife, Leanne, in college and they have been married for 21 years. While they don't have children of their own, they enjoy spoiling their 10 nieces and nephews. They have family located all around the country and enjoy traveling, cooking, and soccer. In fact, Mike is a Manchester United fan and travels to England regularly to attend games.

**Once again, welcome, Mike!** 



# INNOVATING FIRE PROTECTION FOR BATTERY-ELECTRIC VEHICLES

**I**t's predicted that as much as one half of all buses will be electric by 2025. Other industries such as waste, mining and forestry are seeing the same level of growth. This ongoing transformation poses a challenge for the transit industry, as operators seek to meet regulatory requirements and keep drivers and passengers safe while maintaining a fleet of both combustion- and electric-powered vehicles. Amerex is at the forefront of fire protection for electric transit vehicles with an updated electric vehicle (EV) gas detection system.

In battery-electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries provide the power source. Lithium-ion batteries are

made up of multiple power cells that can overheat and spread throughout the batteries, causing a thermal runaway event. The power cells will discharge combustible gas prior to ignition. Amerex's revolutionary new system can detect and notify the operator when this threat occurs.

The Amerex SafetyNet-EV gas detection system is designed and calibrated to detect EV combustible gas at trace levels and to alert the operator of hazardous conditions as soon as possible. In this system, gas sensors are strategically placed in the battery compartments to monitor for volatile combustible gases and relay data to the SafetyNet-EV panel,

so the operator can be notified of any hazardous conditions. Our advanced warning system provides data on cell voltage, gas sensor response and cell temperature, offering priceless additional time compared to traditional detection methods for operators to safely stop a vehicle in a hazardous condition and unload passengers before the situation becomes more dangerous.

As transit operators turn to electric buses, Amerex will be along for the ride, providing an additional measure of lifesaving early detection. 

# BLAZING

## THE WAY FORWARD

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*Meet the women  
revolutionizing  
fire suppression.*

**I**n the 1940s when Dorothy Meskill took over her father's company, Approved Fire Protection, women made up roughly 28% of the workforce. There were sharp differences in the roles men and women held, with only a small number of women pursuing careers in traditionally male industries such as manufacturing, construction and even fire suppression.

"Customers who called would push Grandma Meskill off and ask to speak to the guy in the office," says her granddaughter, Diane Pein, current president of Approved Fire Protection. "This did not deter her, and these customers eventually came to respect her position, becoming good friends. She was always a lady with great decorum who could also fit in with the guys, easily conversing on hunting and sports."

As the number of women in fire suppression steadily rises, Diane believes that the different approach and energetic perspective women can bring to their jobs will make our industry stronger. "On the organizations and committees where I have served, I have seen women deal with hurdles in a more creative way," Diane says.

Today, there are so many influential women making an impact on the fire suppression industry. We spoke with a few of these women to hear more about their careers, experiences and how they see the future of the industry.



## DIANE PEIN

President

**Approved Fire Protection**  
South Plainfield, NJ

**G**rowing up, Diane never planned to join the family business. Determined to be a scientist, she studied biochemical engineering when she began her career. When a severe illness put her out of work for a while, her dad offered her a job at his company. She declined. On a pretense, he sent her to visit Grandma Meskill in Florida, who also suggested she join the family business. Of course, she did. And that was 27 years ago.

While Diane has never thought of fire suppression as being either male- or female-oriented, she did find herself facing some of the same biases that Grandma Meskill faced at first. Starting as a technician to learn every aspect of the business, Diane recalls showing up for service work only to have a customer tell her that it was a rough job that would be too

much for her. Like Grandma Meskill, Diane was not deterred, got the job done, and to this day she and that customer are dear friends, laughing about that first incident.

*“... it really hit me that life has a purpose for us and every avenue takes us through that journey, and this is what I was meant to do.”*

When it came time to take over her father’s business, Diane faced new challenges common in any parent-child succession. “I heard ‘your father wouldn’t do it this way’ a lot,” she says. Her response? “My dad’s not here.” And like everything else, Diane did her thing and kept moving.

But the greatest challenge of Diane’s career also led to her greatest accomplishment. In August 2017

when she bought the company, Approved Fire Protection faced some financial hurdles. Despite the potential for failure, Diane’s leadership team hung with her and were eager to understand and solve the problem together. They turned the business into a flourishing, profitable enterprise, even through the pandemic. “These great leaders on my team could do anything,” she says.

Diane loves the fire suppression industry and all the people she has met. “I felt that particularly in the NAFED Las Vegas conference. After not being together for 18 months, it took me a minute to introduce the keynote speaker because, walking into that venue, it really hit me that life has a purpose for us and every avenue takes us through that journey, and this is what I was meant to do. It took me a long time to get to this spot. I’m so glad to be here, so thank you, Grandma. And I hope she’s proud of what I’m doing.”





## ANNA GAVIN

President  
Fireline Corporation  
Baltimore, MD

Anna Gavin runs Fireline Corporation, a company started by her grandfather and later run by her father. Like Diane, Anna grew up without a desire to join the family business. Although she was looking at fire extinguishers at the age of 5 and would work for her dad occasionally in college, she started her career at Marriott International before returning to work for her dad part-time. Anna never intended to take a leadership role in the company, but when her father passed away unexpectedly in 2008, she was the only one to run it.

*“I never understood the allure of the fire suppression business until I started running it.”*

At first, Anna took on this leadership role because she and her mother knew how important the company had been to her father and they cared



*Women have a strong future in this business. I have seen the numbers increasing in more positions of power throughout my tenure.”*

about the 140 employees. “I never understood the allure of the fire suppression business,” she says, “until I started running it.”

*“I didn’t have other female role models in the industry, but what I have seen in the industry is our numbers are increasing and women are taking more leadership positions.”*

Because Anna was just 27 when she became president, she found her relative youth to be a bigger challenge than her gender. “My network wasn’t as big back then,” she says. “I didn’t have other female role models in the industry. But what I have seen in the industry is our numbers are increasing and women are taking more leadership positions.”

Anna’s favorite part about her job is developing a company culture and providing her team with a good working experience. “Our number-one recruiting tool is our people,” she says. “We have strong referrals and people who are committed to the company.”

“Women have a strong future in this business,” says Anna. “I have seen the numbers increasing in more positions of power throughout my tenure. There are more daughters taking over their fathers’ businesses.” Anna’s executive team is over 60% women, and she has a great blend of backgrounds and experiences on her team.

*Anna’s executive team is over*  
**60%**  
*women.*

As to what Anna would like to see in the future, she thinks women aren’t in enough technical roles that get the most attention. Her biggest advice to both men and women who want to join the industry? “Say yes, even if you feel like you are not already the most qualified. I have learned so much by saying yes in this industry.”



## STACI STIDHAM

Office Manager & Co-Owner  
Cofessco Fire Protection  
Muskegon, MI

The fire suppression industry is also a family affair for Staci Stidham of Cofessco Fire Protection, who recalls being around the business – where her dad served as president – since she was 5 years old. Like Diane and Anna, Staci first spread her wings working in other industries

before joining her father's company. "My dad approached me in 2005 to see if I would be interested in coming to work for him," says Staci. "I was looking for a more fulfilling career, so I jumped at the chance."

*"I really liked the physical side of the business and see a lot of things on-site with customers."*

She started by helping with data entry for new installation projects, and soon, her curiosity about the business took her on service calls with technicians. "The challenge in working with the technicians wasn't so much that I was female as it was that I was the boss's daughter," she says. "They thought I was there as some sort of a spy, but I was just there to learn."

Once the techs realized that she was not watching their every move to report back to the owner, she developed a strong relationship with them. "I really liked the physical side of the business and seeing a lot of things on-site with our customers," says Staci. "I want to do more hands-on in-field training."

One of the things Staci likes most about the business is that each day is a little different and each day she has the opportunity to help someone, whether it is a customer or an employee. "Gender barriers are coming down all over the world. Women have always been capable of so much, and gaining the confidence to realize it and act upon it will convince more women to get involved in fire protection. It's not just a boys' club anymore, and the more that women are motivated and empowered to thrive in this industry, the more of this shift we will see."



## KENDALL MAY LIDDICOAT

Field Operations Manager  
Metro Safety and Fire, Inc.  
Portland, OR

Kendall May Liddicoat began her career in the industry a little differently from the women we've profiled so far. "Years ago, a friend of mine was working for Metro Safety and Fire at the time and called to recruit me to perform fire watch for the building. Twenty-two-year-old me thought, 'OK, whatever that is.' I happened to be available and willing to walk around a building every half-an-hour for a week. It was absolutely the easiest and most boring position I've had in the industry to date," recalls Kendall. After this little adventure, Kendall was asked to join the office team in Accounts Receivable, where

a curiosity for what exactly she was processing took hold. The field team patiently explained the different aspects of the company to Kendall. This thirst for knowledge led her to continue with the company as she grew into the position that she got to know and love.

"Like other 'lifers' in the industry – it just bit me," she says. "All things fire-nerdy got into my blood. The science behind why certain chemicals behave the way they do, how they interact with other media they are protecting. I love the way technology keeps moving the industry forward."

*“The boots on the ground are the most vital part to ensuring our customers are taken care of. So it starts with me taking care of them.”*

What motivates Kendall the most is her field team. They show up every day to do their very best for their customers and community. Her primary goal is to be sure that they are equipped with the tools, knowledge, resources and connections that will help them use their time effectively and safely. “The boots on the ground are the most vital part to ensuring our customers are taken care of,” she says. “So it starts with me taking care of them.”

One of Kendall’s favorite parts of the industry is the people. “I’ve had

the pleasure to meet and work with some incredibly brilliant, innovative, and motivated humans throughout the years,” she adds. From attending NAFED events and being part of the conference planning committee, to participating in Amerex’s FlashForward, to keeping up with monthly trainings and becoming vice president of the Oregon Fire Equipment Distributors Association.

*“You’re going to get dirty and have long days. But at the end of the day, you’ll know that you’ve contributed to keeping your community protected and educated.”*

Kendall has enjoyed watching Metro Safety and Fire become an employee-owned and female-led company.

*Metro Safety and Fire is now an employee-owned and female-led company.*

Her best advice to women and others considering a career in fire suppression? “Do it!” says Kendall. “You’re going to get dirty and have long days. But at the end of the day, you’ll know that you’ve contributed to keeping your community protected and educated. Being female doesn’t necessarily help or hinder any portion of your potential career in the industry. If you’ve got a knack or passion for it, jump in and you’ll find a great group of like-minded people.”



## MELINDA ATWOOD WANKE

CMO/Program Director  
BHC/FED Learning Center  
Charlotte, NC

Like Kendall, Melinda stumbled into the fire protection industry but found the opportunity so amazing that she dug in and happily hasn’t looked back. “I’m passionate about fire protection because it’s a special trade; if done properly, it protects lives and property,” she says. “Fires happen every single day, and when there is no loss of life, I’m incredibly proud of our professional community.”

Hands-down, the favorite part of her work has to be creating the FED Learning Center. “Many commercial buildings aren’t fire safety compliant, despite fire safety codes and businesses willing to comply,”

Melinda states. “There’s simply greater demand than the supply of qualified technicians. The FEDLC addresses this issue head-on; I’m so grateful to have been trusted with this responsibility!”

Each day Melinda wakes up thinking about ways to bring more talent into our industry because fire is a real threat to lives and property. She knows it takes a considerable knowledge, expertise and renewable workforce to develop, install, and maintain the safety equipment systems that protects us all.

Melinda has experienced firsthand the tremendous strides that women



*“Was I going to cower and be the ‘little girl’ they expected me to be, or was I going to stand up and be the industry leader I knew I could be?”*

have made in the industry. In 2003, she went to the first trade event of her career. She was representing her company in a safety distributor buying group discussing the importance of fire safety on construction sites when she overheard a man say, “What is this little girl going to teach us about fire extinguishers?” At that point, Melinda knew she had to decide who she was going to be.

“Was I going to cower and be the ‘little girl’ they expected me to be, or was I going to stand up and be the industry leader I knew I could be?” she says. “So, I simply smiled, making eye contact with him. I wanted him to know that I acknowledged his concern but would show him that I could and would bring value. I’ve been steadfast since; not even blinking in similar situations.”

***BHC’s Chief  
Human Resources  
Officer is certified  
in Diversity, Equity  
and Inclusion.***

She would love to see our professional community continue to recognize the value of women.

“I’d love to see industry members participate in the FED Learning Center On-Demand series covering micro-aggressions,” she says. “At BHC, we’re lucky enough to have a CHRO certified in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and have been collaborating with her to bring views, via training sessions, into the industry.” She’s proud to help create greater access to this important information through their platform and is hopeful that every person in fire protection spends intentional time on the topic.

*“Everyone’s truth is their own but deciding before the beat of the moment, how to react before the situation arises, will add two valuable tools to their tool bag — grace and confidence.”*

Her advice to women, especially young women, is to, first, expect equity and inclusion every time, everywhere and never marginalization due to gender identity. Second, she suggests they need to decide how to respond to negative comments or situations before they’re in that moment.

“I made my decision in that first event and have carried my truth for

20 years. Everyone’s truth is their own but deciding before the heat of the moment, how to react before the situation arises, will add two valuable tools to their tool bag — grace and confidence,” she says. “You can never control others, but you have absolute control over your story and your journey. Being prepared will help you be the best version of yourself.”

So, to women everywhere, Melinda says to write your own story and go forward being great!



## KATE LEE

Director of Marketing  
Summit Companies  
Mendota Heights, MN

A relative newcomer, Kate joined the industry by chance three years ago when her recruiter pitched her current role at Summit Companies. She had previously worked in the banking industry and was ready for a change. “Talk about a change!” she says. “These last three years have been a combination of challenging, exciting, refreshing and drinking from a fire hose ... all at once.”

*“... I don’t need to twist the sales pitch or message for [the end user] to see that fire suppression is worth caring about.”*

Prior to working at Summit Companies, if you had asked Kate why she cares about fire suppression, she would not have realized the importance or necessity of it. She now would answer that you HAVE to care. “Our lives and safety depend on having maintained fire suppression

systems in place,” she says. “And I can easily connect the dots from my role in marketing to the end user – I don’t need to twist the sales pitch or message for them to see that fire suppression is worth caring about. The threat of destruction, devastation and interruption that fire poses is reason enough to care and take action.”

Protecting and securing the safety and well-being of the Summit customers motivates Kate each day. In addition, the team around her, from the technicians in the field to the CEO to the managers who run the branches all work extremely hard. That type of passion and motivation is contagious. “One of the things I love most about my job is the partnership with people across the company. With our different backgrounds and perspectives, we can come together to find solutions by putting ourselves in the customer’s shoes.”

Her job is to constantly think about how Summit Companies is showing up in the world and the value that the company is providing not just to customers, but to people who just saw a social media post. Everything from impacting communities to making sure that the Summit Companies

employees feel valued are the little things that make all the difference.

Kate has seen the number of women leaders and team members at Summit Companies alone dramatically increase during her tenure. “I’m proud to say that many of these women I work alongside have dedicated their career to fire protection and have paved the way for other women within the industry,” she says. “We not only have more women team members in sales and office roles; we also have promoted and hired several women for roles that have been previously male dominated, such as branch managers and technicians.”

She’s thankful to work for a company that welcomes and encourages all voices to contribute, men and women alike. Her advice to other women who would like to enter the field is to use the strengths and qualities that are unique to you especially within an industry that’s all about saving lives and keeping people safe. “Be curious and ask questions,” she says. “Partner and rely on each other – you can’t do it alone. And make sure the company that you work for and the people you surround yourself with give you energy and a sense of purpose.”

*“I’m proud to say many of these women I work alongside have dedicated their career to fire protection and have paved the way for other women within the industry.”*



*Internationally*  
BLAZING THE WAY FORWARD



**STEFANIE  
HERRMANN**

*Managing Director (& Co-Owner)*  
**Umbra FSP GmbH**  
Berlin, Germany

**F**ire suppression is a global industry, and Amerex is lucky enough to partner with incredible men and women around the world like Stefanie Herrmann of Berlin, Germany-based Umbra FSP. Stefanie boasts nearly 20 years of experience already, but like some of the other women profiled, she found the industry by chance. “I began working as a student at tedious tasks, like data entry, and soon I was supporting the marketing & engineering department with creating and revising data sheets,” Stefanie recalls.

“When I finished university, I helped develop a sales department within an existing company that designed and installed fire suppression systems. After one year, my previous director and I decided to spin off the department and form a new company which became Umbra FSP (FSP for Fire Safety Products),” Stefanie says. “Since, I have had the pleasure to become one of the two owners of Umbra as well as taking on the director/manager position.”

Even though she didn’t always intend to enter the fire suppression industry, Stefanie’s appreciation for firefighting is deeply rooted. “I had an incident with fire in my childhood, so I know how scary it can be. I was heroically rescued from our apartment by a firefighter. None of my family was hurt and our property was not seriously damaged. Fire is dangerous and its impacts can be devastating for people, businesses, communities and the environment. It’s a very important aspect of construction and various industries,” she says.

Now, Stefanie is motivated to help protect people and property and, as a company leader, to also to lead her company. “The business is my ‘baby’ and I want to see it grow up. We have proven our value to a good number of partners, and it is my responsibility to care for our employees and to offer the best possible customer service, both technically and commercially. My favorite parts of my work are talking

with customers, developing technical solutions and learning about new and different technologies in fire suppression,” Stefanie adds.

*“We’ve proven our value and abilities, so I hope to see more women continue to lead.”*

Stefanie also hopes to see more gender parity in leadership roles in the future. “I do have to admit that women are still underrepresented in the fire suppression industry. Most women in the industry are not in ‘the front row’, so to speak. A small number of women are present for the community, for customers and in organizations, and all of these women are well known and respected. We’ve proven our value and abilities, so I hope to see more women continue to lead.”

In the future, Stefanie looks forward to seeing the industry continue to be invigorated by energetic new faces. She says, “I’ve noticed a larger share of younger people active in this industry than in the past, and I hope this trend will continue, and I hope that also means that female representation will improve.” Stefanie has simple advice for young women considering a career in the fire suppression industry: “Don’t be afraid! Try your luck and believe in your abilities!” 



# ON THE ROAD AGAIN

## *Returning to Trade Shows*

BY BEN PITTS

When Willie Nelson wrote “On the Road Again,” he probably never imagined how good it would feel to get back on the road after a pandemic-induced travel hiatus! After many of our usual industry conferences and trade shows were canceled in 2020 and early 2021, it was a pleasure for the Amerex team to get back on the road to visit with many of our important industry partners and customers.

In September, our Vehicle Systems team attended **MINExpo International** in Las Vegas. Bill Jolbert, Director of Sales—Vehicle Systems, was among the Amerex team members staffing our booth to promote Amerex KODIAK fierce vehicle fire protection. We showed off some of our staple products for the mining industry like corrosion-resistant Z-Series portables, corrosion-resistant stored pressure cylinders for dry chemical, ICS liquid and Dry-ICS agent systems, and control panels including the new SafetyNet-EV panel, which expands

capabilities for multiple zones on large machinery. It was great to reconnect with our many friends in the mining industry.

In early October, I joined members of the Amerex Defense team, including Ken Mier, Defense General Manager, at the **Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Annual Meeting and Exposition** in Washington, D.C., to showcase Amerex’s mil-spec solutions to help protect American warfighters from extreme fire hazards. Amerex vehicle fire suppression systems, including rapid optical detection and actuation as found in the JLTV tactical vehicle from Oshkosh Defense, were on display alongside flight line solutions like the NOVEC 1230 wheeled unit.

Next, the Amerex KP/IS team headed across the Atlantic to attend **HostMilano**, the largest show in the world dedicated to the food service and hospitality industry. We showcased the Amerex KP system

with STRIKE ECS, including the Zone Defense protection setup, the new KP250 cylinder, salamander broiler protection and other recent system innovations. We were excited to have the chance to meet with several important European partners at Host.

Finally, we finished the year with a focus on transit, first at the **American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Expo** in Orlando in November. The Amerex Vehicle Systems group teamed up with Mark Magaldi and Transit Marketing Group to show off solutions. And speaking of buses, Joe Rost, Sales Manager—Vehicle Systems, was on-hand at the **Transporting Students with Disabilities Expo** in Frisco, Texas, later in November to showcase solutions for school transportation. 

# AMEREX 2022

## EVENTS CALENDAR

Event Description	Location	Dates
Oregon Loggers	Eugene, OR	Feb. 24–26
KP/IS Training	Las Vegas, NV	Mar. 7–8
VS Training	Las Vegas, NV	Mar. 9
NAFED	Las Vegas, NV	Mar. 10–11
GASFED	Atlanta, GA	Mar. 22–24
NAFED	Atlantic City, NJ	Apr. 7–8
KP/IS Training	Charlotte, NC	Apr. 12–13
KP/IS Training	Online (PST)	Apr. 26–27
Wastexpo Tradeshow Exhibit	Las Vegas, NV	May 9–12
NAFED	Indianapolis, IN	May 12–13
VS Training	Online (CST)	May 16
International KP/IS Training	Online	May 18
KP/IS Training	Chicago, IL	May 25–26
VS Training	Chicago, IL	May 27
STNEXPO	Indianapolis, IN	Jun. 3–7
NFPA	Boston, MA	Jun. 6–9
Elko Mine Expo	Elko, NV	Jun. 6–10

Event Description	Location	Dates
KP/IS Training	Online (CST)	Jun. 14–15
FFEDA Conference	TBD	TBD
KP/IS Training	Seattle, WA	Jul. 12–13
STNEXPO West	Reno, NV	Jul. 15–20
NAFSM Annual Symposium	New Orleans, LA	Aug. 1–3
KP/IS Training	Columbus, OH	Aug. 9–10
KP/IS Training	Online	Aug. 23–24
International KP/IS Training	Online	Sep. 7
CALSAFE Annual Conference	Ontario, CA	Oct. 7–8
AUSA	Washington, DC	Oct. 10–12
KP/IS Training	Allentown, PA	Oct. 11–12
VS Training	Allentown, PA	Oct. 13
KP/IS Training	Dallas, TX	Nov. 8–9
VS Training	Dallas, TX	Nov. 10
KP/IS Training	Trussville, AL	Dec. 6–7
VS Training	Trussville, AL	Dec. 8



# PRODUCT UPDATES

## KITCHEN AND INDUSTRIAL FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS

QUALITY

SERVICE

INNOVATION

**High Quality Products  
Built to Protect  
and Perform.**

The Kitchen Protection and Industrial Systems team at Amerex is thankful for its amazing network of distributors. Our success as a team and product line is dependent on the partnerships that we have with our wide-stretching distribution network.

This period has presented no shortage of hurdles for us or for our distributors and customers. The incredible rebound of the hospitality industry in the U.S. and slightly delayed rebound occurring across the globe have created significant demand for fire suppression systems. At this point, we are all acutely aware of labor shortages and material shortages, and we have again had to shift our “normal.” It is abundantly clear that our distributors are committed to facing these challenges head on, as is Amerex.

Our Supply Chain team has used creative and new ways to reduce lead times and procure parts where an original supply source may have completely stopped. Knowing that the success of our system distributors hinges on the delivery of a multitude of parts to complete a job, we continually strive to increase

our available inventory, reduce lead times and minimize delays. Amerex is committed to the success of our distributors, not only in the U.S. and Canadian markets, but across our entire global distribution network.

Amid all these challenges, we are progressing towards product advancements and new products. With the release of the new KP250 cylinder, our distributors have the ability to bid more competitively while still providing customers with a premier kitchen fire suppression system. Its 8-inch diameter allows for a convenient fit into the end cabinet of most commercial kitchen hoods.

Our team has been strategically laying out further advancements for appliance coverage, ease of use, and innovation. With ever-growing demand for flexibility in commercial cooking operations, it is imperative that Amerex provides its customers with the tools to meet this head on. 2022 is already shaping to be a year of growth in our Kitchen Protection abilities, and bringing more design options for your business is our goal.



## DEFENSE

It was great to be back in-person at this year's AUSA (Association of the United States Army) meeting and exposition as a National Partner exhibitor October 11–13 in Washington, D.C., after the 2020 in-person event was cancelled due to the pandemic. The event was well-attended and focused. Our team had the opportunity to explore ongoing projects and potential new ones with key contacts



in the 300,000-square-foot exhibit hall over the three-day event.

We were able to personally meet with many of our customers, both existing and several new ones, including General Motors Defense. GM Defense is charging straight ahead into the military market armed with the knowledge gained from over 100 years of vehicle manufacturing, with several new programs under consideration by the US Army.

Another customer we have been chosen to work with on a track-driven armored personnel carrier vehicle, PB Enterprises, held an adjacent meeting to discuss our specific project. We were also able to spend time with others that are working the same project with our products as well.

Representatives from Spectronix, our partner from Israel, attended the show and spent some time in our booth talking with us and prospective customers. We were also able to meet with one of their customers that we will work with in the coming months on a project in partnership with Spectronix.

**ABOVE:** Pictured in the Amerex Defense booth photo are team members (from left to right) Ken Mier, Ben Pitts, Kendall Pate, Susan Ray, Chris Nichols and Nolan Hoffman. Many thanks to our business partners (both current and prospective) for stopping by our booth to discuss your fire suppression needs.

# PRODUCT UPDATES, CONTINUED

## PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

### Wheeled extinguishers: versatile fire protection tools

Wheeled extinguishers are a unique solution for high-hazard areas where large quantities of flammable materials are found, including petroleum storage, consumer goods warehouses, health care environments and industrial facilities, to name a few. Amerex has the right wheeled solution for these settings and more. ABC dry chemical is versatile in its coverage. Purple K delivers a significant punch to knock down and extinguish class B fires quickly. Our CO<sub>2</sub> wheeled extinguishers are perfect for low-cost recharging where Class B fires are frequent. And clean agent wheeled extinguishers provide maximum protection and minimize collateral damage with rapidly evaporating firefighting chemicals.

When installing wheeled extinguishers in new environments, keep in mind that the servicing of these extinguishers is unique to each product and will require additional time and equipment to keep the extinguishers in top operating condition.

There is a misconception that wheeled extinguishers are useful only in heavy-duty industrial



environments. While the need is certainly present in tank farms and other oil and gas facilities, these powerful firefighting tools can be useful for broader applications. Airports require quick knockdown of flammable materials and often Purple K wheeled extinguishers are installed at an airport ramp. Clean agents also work well in this application and are the primary flight line firefighting support of many of our Amerex Defense customers. Additionally, heliports require protection in accordance with NFPA 410. Purple K dry chemical and clean agent wheeled extinguishers can meet these installation requirements.

An increasing number of warehouses also use wheeled extinguishers to meet code and firefighting needs. Long-range discharges and higher

ratings than hand portables provide an advantage in the high racks and long aisleways of warehouses.

These versatile extinguishers require specialized maintenance procedures to remain in top operating condition. Stored pressure wheeled extinguishers are maintained on a similar schedule to stored pressure hand portables, though additional maintenance steps are required due to increased product complexity. Cylinder operated extinguishers follow a separate unique schedule outlined in our maintenance and service manuals. To better understand the specialized maintenance schedules, see our new training videos on our website.

# 2022

## FIRE EXTINGUISHER UPDATES

**A**s a reminder, the email we sent at the end of 2021 updated our product line offerings.

**A redesigned Class K extinguisher** features a new valve assembly and hose design that is simpler to use and easier to install. The C260 and C262 replace the B260 and B262. The extinguisher you have depended on for years to protect commercial kitchens has the same stored pressure design, stainless-steel cylinder and user-friendly features that you can read about.

**An O-ring update to our dry chemical hand portable extinguishers.** Our engineers designed these products in such a way that O-rings are no longer a necessary component on most of

our hand portable hose assemblies. As such, future dry chemical hand portables will be made without them. Our O-ring supply will run through the end of the year and you will not need this part when servicing Amerex extinguishers.

**Changes to the design of our hoses.** In order to keep up with product demand and improve our supply chain, we have expanded our sourcing so you will notice a slight change to the appearance of our portable extinguisher hoses.

**An updated assortment of wheeled extinguishers.** Our new wheeled extinguisher catalog showcases the complete line.

**Introduction of three new Purple K extinguisher models:** the new Purple K 376, 377, and 378.

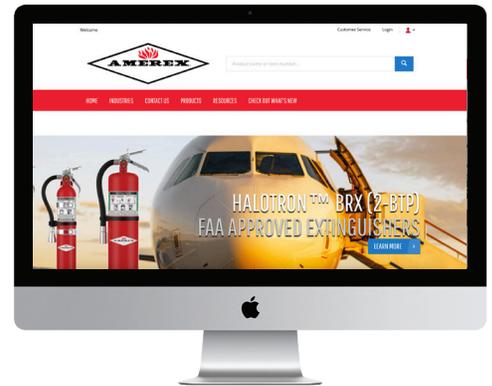
**Phasing out of our regular extinguishers.** For the most efficient product line offering, we've put together a stronger assortment of extinguishers. We've created a substitution guide for customers who purchase regular extinguishers on our website. 

# GET YOUR ORDER IN FASTER!

## KEY FEATURES OF THE WEB STORE

*We're dedicated to serving our fire equipment distributor partners to the absolute best of our ability. That's why we continue to update and optimize the Amerex Web Store experience for you.*

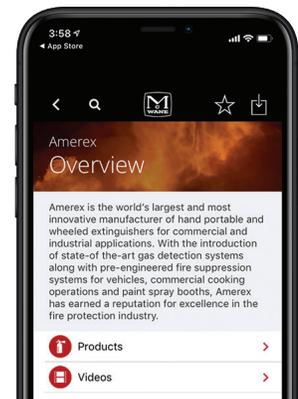
- Improved order and shipment tracking.
- Solutions organized by industry application.
- Easy navigation and simple search.
- Detailed and up-to-date product information.
- The convenience of shopping and ordering 24/7 from any location with internet access.
- The ability to double-check your cart for completeness and accuracy before placing your order.
- The convenience of saving shopping carts for later if you're in the middle of placing an order and something comes up.



*Contact your sales representative or customer service if you need assistance logging in to the Web Store.*

### POCKET ENGINEER

Keep important Amerex information at your fingertips via the McWane Pocket Engineer app or by visiting [pe.mcwane.com](http://pe.mcwane.com).



## WHY AMEREX

### Quality

Amerex didn't become a global market leader overnight. Our business has grown year after year based on our products' reputation for performance and durability in even the most rugged environments.

### Service

Amerex was founded upon a mutual appreciation for premium quality in products and customer service and the importance of interpersonal relations.

### Innovation

Because Amerex is independently owned and forward thinking, we are continuously innovating and investing for the benefit of our customers and those they serve.



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Amerex Fire



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Amerex Corporation