

# Fire Systems Help Protect Farms



William Arble, technical specialist with PennTAP, checks out a sprinkler head at the Shenk farm. If a fire is detected, the sprinkler will activate for 20 to 25 minutes to help control and contain a fire.



Steve Dyer, director of special projects for Old Guard Mutual Insurance Company, was liaison on the fire prevention project.

(Continued from Page B12) tilation, warning devices, fire suppression systems, and additional installations in a barn. Smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, and appropriate diagrams on how to

install a working system are laid out for the average farmer. (The booklet is available from the Publications Distribution Center, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA

16802; enclose \$2.50 for postage and handling.)

Dyer said the booklet is a benefit to farmers. "It tries to explain to the farmer what the system is and what it will do," he said. "The ultimate benefit, if many farmers would do this, is when a building catches on fire, the sprinkler system would come on enough to control the fire. It might not put it out, but at least it will knock it down to the point where it's manageable until the fire department arrives."

Dyer said because Penn State was doing the primary research, farmers were willing to volunteer some farms for the work. "Penn State was a big part of it," he said. "The fact that we could say this was from Penn State and they had a good reputation."

According to a story published in "Old Guard Chronicle" (the company newsletter) about the system in 1987, in the past, farmers attempting to install fire suppression systems have had problems. "Pipes were subject to freezing and cracking, and the chemicals present in many farm buildings caused the pipes to deteriorate. According to Murphy, technology currently exists to alleviate these problems, but the technology has not been applied to the fullest extent."

### Improve detection

Old Guard, which has a total of 350 agents (and about 70 agents in Lancaster County alone who write farm insurance), believes the work of PennTAP "will contribute to improved fire detection and suppression systems for agricultural buildings and increased use of those systems by farmers," according to the Chronicle. "When this occurs, it will allow Old Guard to develop rate credits that recognize the installation of fire control systems."

Dyer agreed. "It certainly wouldn't raise them. In most cases, it's hard to tell. That's a problem we're still wrestling with. Dennis (Murphy) is really concerned and so are we that the system is affordable.

"And we can't say, dollar for dollar, exactly how much the farmer is going to save on any particular policy," said Dyer. "Certainly it makes the risk more insurable. And it makes it a better risk.

"The booklet tells them what they need to think about and what they can do to make their farm more insurable and safer," he said.



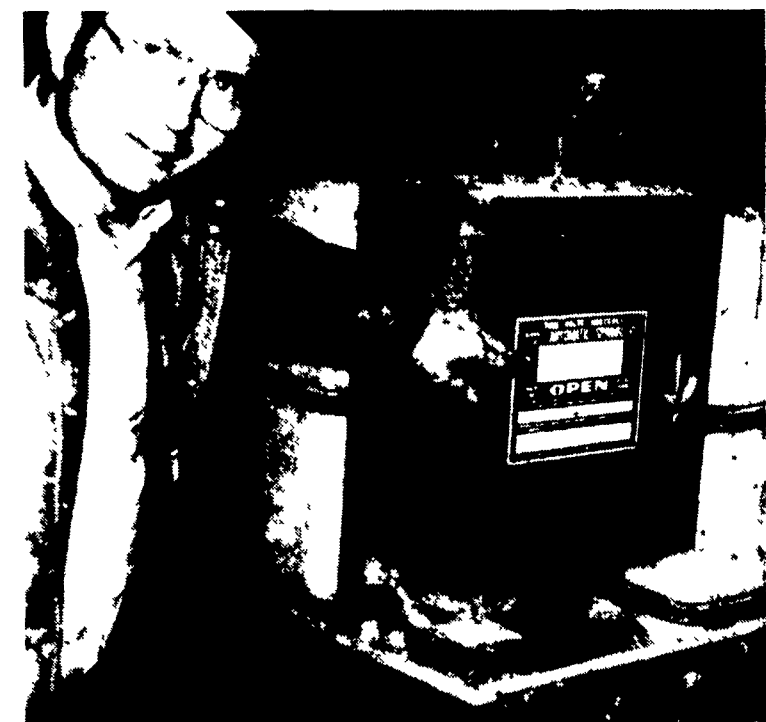
"I wasn't sure I wanted to go through with the project or not," said Glenn Shenk, who operates the farm. "I think that if there would be a fire, the system would at least slow it down so we could get the cattle out a little easier, or soon enough." Sprinkler heads are mounted above the cattle, ready to respond in case of fire.



Dennis Murphy, Penn State ag engineer, tests out the fire detection alarm system.



The project leaders check out the alarm system before a test of the water delivery system on the PennTAP project at the Glenn Shenk farm.



Mounted in the Haldeman swine barn in Penryn is a 500-gallon tank filled with water. According to William Arble, technical specialist with PennTAP, a special electric pump delivers water to sprinkler heads.



The 500-gallon holding tank uses water from the cattle delivery system at the farm. William Arble, PennTAP technical specialist, installed the plumbing of the fire control system at the Glenn Sheck farm in Manheim.



A flow switch, activated by a microswitch that responds to water flow, signals an alert — a possible fire. William Arble checks out the switch before a water delivery test.