



KEY THE MIC

SHOW NOTES: EPISODE No. 10



Grant Van Der Jagt has worn numerous hats and explored many interests throughout his life, ranging from real estate management, to practicing law, and serving as a volunteer firefighter. His most recent endeavor is promoting his first major invention, the Auto Fire Guard (or “FireBall”), an automatic fire extinguisher that is safe, affordable, and non-toxic. Grant joins us to discuss the “FireBall”, and how it can improve fire safety wherever it is installed.

www.autofireguard.com

Determining a Need for Automatic Fire Suppression:

“When you’re on a fire scene and you’re observing the way things react to fire and the way people react to fire, you just take notes and then you go back after the event and discuss it with your chief and your team and your family. It’s through that process that I started to identify ways we could improve and started looking for technology that could help advance the firefighting process.” [1:26]

“I sort of dedicated the device to two fires that were really traumatic in our community—several people died, and in both cases, we knew where the fire would have started, statistically, you know—they start at the stove or they start at the dryer. Coming from the insurance world in my prior life, I know about the actuarial statistics [...] and I was just kind of shocked that we would know so precisely where fires start the majority of the time, yet those devices don’t have any built-in fire suppression systems.” [2:10]

NOTABLE :

“I think the public just does not recognize how hazardous a fire is so they sometimes run in under the false premise that they can defeat the fire with a small fire extinguisher... Not everybody is capable of using [a fire extinguisher], not everybody should use [one]. I think most firefighters would tell a family whose house is on fire ‘get out!’ I don’t think any of us would really say ‘go grab a fire extinguisher.’” [3:45]

“We need to do more to set up automated systems so that the public doesn’t have to face the fire, they should receive one clear instruction: get out of the house, save your life, call 911, and that’s it. Let our devices do the rest.” [4:47]

Developing the “FireBall”:

“It was almost an off-hand comment made by my son. He said, ‘we have airbags that save people’s lives. How come we just don’t put an airbag inside of a fire extinguisher?’” [5:17]

“We make them in various sizes for various types of fires. They activate only on direct contact with fire [...] using what we call an ‘air burst’ technology... it pops much like a balloon. We’ve been able to calibrate our air burst technology to be 100% safe... it feels like you caught a professional football when it goes off in your hand. The chemical inside is pure dry chemical monoammonium phosphate, it’s the highest purity that you can obtain, and that is food grade monoammonium phosphate.” [6:48]

Introducing the FireBall to the Fire Service:

“I think we should have [the Auto Fire Guard] anywhere fire is possible.” [10:40]

“Several fire marshals have said yes it qualifies, and several have said no, and so that’s where it is really coming down to the fire marshals’ discretion. You can adopt it through the international building code and have an amendment to it to say we’re going to allow for the FireBall in this community. Some fire marshals have said they’re just not going to disallow it; the real question is are they going to allow it to substitute for a regular fire extinguisher – and this may come as a shock – I don’t really think it should be a substitute. I think it should be in addition to a regular fire extinguisher... but you’re going to find a better overall fire protection system by having the FireBall included.” [13:21]

“Inventors like myself really need to band together. Introducing new technology to the fire service is extremely challenging... and there are some really wonderful technologies that are on the market. There’s one that automatically closes doors when there is a fire –that saves lives! ... As a fire service population, as a people, as a family, we need to adopt these things, we need to encourage innovation.” [16:07]

HOST



Inanna Hencke joined the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA) team in 2018, and serves as the Director of Association Management in addition to her role as Podcast Host. She received her undergraduate degree in Religious Studies from the University of Oregon, with a minor in Environmental Studies. In her free time, she can be found experimenting with vegan recipes, working on various art projects, horseback riding, and playing Dungeons & Dragons.