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Built for protection: NAFFCO rises as a global fire safety leader

Over the last 33 years, UAE-headquartered NAFFCO Group has grown into a global leader in fire safety. This is their story.



From left to right: Ahmed Khalid Al Khatib (group MD of NAFFCO Group), Eng. Khalid Al Khatib (CEO of NAFFCO Group), Ali Khalid Al Khatib (group MD of NAFFCO Group).

The year 1991 marked the beginning of NAFFCO Group.

Starting with just 15 employees and a modest facility manufacturing basic fire extinguishers, NAFFCO Group now stands as a global powerhouse and the world's No. 1 total solutions provider in the fire and safety space. With over

15,000 employees and state-of-the-art facilities spanning 10.5 million square feet, the company's journey is a masterclass in transformation.

"At our inception, it was about saving lives," recalls Chief Executive Officer Eng. Khalid Al Khatib. Khalid's journey into fire safety started long before NAFFCO Group's inception. "From the beginning, we focused not just on manufacturing products but on building trust and delivering solutions that truly protect lives," he says. From pioneering high-pressure CO2 cylinder manufacturing in 1998 to redefining UAE safety standards in 2004, NAFFCO Group's evolution exemplifies adaptability and foresight.

Khalid's leadership style embraces grit, efficiency, and innovation. "Success is more than innovation," he states. "It's persistence through setbacks and the determination to thrive under pressure." NAFFCO Group's innovative spirit has led to custom-engineered safety solutions catering to diverse sectors — from healthcare to high-rise buildings. Today, its products and services range from fire alarms and sprinklers to AI- and IoT-powered safety systems.

Over the years, NAFFCO Group has contributed to iconic projects such as the Burj Khalifa, which required designing a gravity-fed sprinkler system unique to the world's tallest structure. The Dubai Metro stands as another testament to the company's capabilities, integrating comprehensive fire detection and suppression systems for the transport network. NAFFCO Group's impact extends beyond borders too. In Bangladesh, the company modernised fire safety across 3,000 factories, significantly reducing fire-related fatalities. In Senegal, their deployment of turnkey fire safety solutions elevated industrial safety standards, benefiting economies and protecting lives. Their contributions also include large-scale industrial complexes, international airports, oil and gas industries, and marine projects.



Eng. Khalid Al Khatib, CEO of NAFFCO

Khalid notes that every environment poses unique challenges, but innovation has always been at the core of NAFFCO Group's approach. From addressing rust issues in conventional piping by replacing them with high-density polyethylene pipes to developing advanced firefighting vehicles for critical applications, the company continues to push boundaries. Khalid credits much of NAFFCO Group's growth to the unwavering commitment of its team. "From a single facility to a global operation of 15,000 employees serving over 100 countries, our progress is a testament to resilience, adaptability, and a relentless pursuit of excellence," he adds, reflecting on the company's journey as one of the world's leading producers and suppliers of top-tier firefighting equipment, fire protection systems, fire alarms, and security and safety engineering systems. NAFFCO Group has positioned itself as a one-stop total solutions provider, catering to diverse industries worldwide.

Leadership transition

After establishing itself as a global leader, the baton of leadership at NAFFCO Group is transitioning. Khalid Al Khatib is increasingly entrusting the future of his company to his sons, Ahmed and Ali. "Ahmed and Ali have been part of

the journey from the beginning, contributing significantly to NAFFCO Group's growth," says Khalid.

Ahmed Khalid Al Khatib, Group Managing Director at NAFFCO Group, with over a decade of experience, plays a pivotal role in managing operations across the NAFFCO Group. He is transforming global safety standards through advanced engineering, innovative practices, and a commitment to sustainability. With expertise cultivated over the past decade, Ahmed seamlessly integrates high-tech safety systems with efficient manufacturing processes, driving strategic growth and establishing new facilities in key markets such as the UAE, USA, KSA, Qatar, and Egypt.

Ali Khalid Al Khatib now leads as Group Managing Director, with a focus on driving global expansion and overseeing vehicle manufacturing and worldwide operations. Under his watch, NAFFCO Group has strengthened its foothold in over 100 countries across five continents. His efforts have been instrumental in aligning NAFFCO Group's offerings with local regulations while maintaining its commitment to exceeding global standards.



Ahmed Khalid Al Khatib, group managing director, NAFFCO Group

The brothers' leadership has introduced a renewed energy into NAFFCO Group. "It's inspiring to work alongside a new generation of leaders who share the same passion for innovation and excellence," says Eng. Khalid. Under Ahmed's leadership, NAFFCO Group has pioneered cutting-edge solutions across diverse sectors, including firefighting equipment, fire alarm systems, fire doors, security solutions, flow control, modular systems, cladding, smoke management, and oil and gas safety. Notable innovations include IoT-enabled safety technologies that integrate real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, and automated alerts, shifting safety management from reactive to proactive. "Through AI integration, we are creating solutions that anticipate and address issues before they escalate," Ahmed shares.

Ali's contributions to expanding NAFFCO Group's manufacturing capabilities have been equally transformative. With new facilities in Saudi Arabia, Australia, the UAE, USA, and India, the company is poised to meet growing global demands. "Scaling up is not just about numbers; it's about maintaining quality at every step," Ali explains. The establishment of a 1.9 million sq. ft. manufacturing plant for ARFF vehicles, firefighting trucks, and ambulances underscores this commitment. "These vehicles are not just products; they're lifelines in critical environments," Ali adds.

Eng. Khalid reflects on this transition with pride. "The foundation we built is strong, but it's the vision of the next generation that will take NAFFCO Group to even greater heights," he says.

Global expansion and impact

NAFFCO Group's global footprint now spans over 100 countries, supported by manufacturing facilities in the UAE, UK, US, Australia, Qatar, KSA, Egypt, and India. This vast network reflects the company's commitment to delivering fire safety solutions at a scale unmatched in the industry. "Our mission has always been to ensure safety wherever it's needed," says Ali. "Each manufacturing facility represents our dedication to quality, efficiency, and innovation." Their flagship facility, a 950,000 sq. ft. ARFF chassis plant, epitomises this ambition, producing custom-built vehicles for critical environments. "We set the benchmark in fire safety," Ali notes, highlighting their annual production capacity of 5,000 vehicles.



Ali Khalid Al Khatib, group MD of NAFFCO Group.

The company’s landmark achievements include the iconic Burj Khalifa, Dubai World Central International Airport, Dubai Metro and Trams, Museum of the Future, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Expo 2020 Dubai, Qatar Metro, and many more. Each project posed unique challenges, which were met with bespoke solutions. “For Expo 2020, we integrated safety systems that complemented the event’s futuristic architectural vision,” Ahmed explains.



The commitment to training extends to community outreach. NAFFCO Group's free certifications for engineers aim to elevate safety standards across regions. "Education is a pillar of safety," Eng. Khalid explains. "When individuals are informed and skilled, entire communities benefit."

Sustainability is at the heart of NAFFCO Group's innovations. From developing fluorine-free foam extinguishers to manufacturing high-density polyethylene pipes that eliminate rust and last over 50 years, the company demonstrates its commitment to the environment. Its range of hybrid-electric fire trucks and eco-friendly firefighting foams sets benchmarks in reducing carbon footprints.



Rapid Intervention Vehicle (RIV)



ARFF 8X8 (Falcon Series) - Custom Built Chassis

Future vision and strategy

Ahmed's focus on technological leadership extends to advanced training programmes, training over 2,500 professionals annually. The introduction of VR-based training modules has significantly enhanced preparedness for high-risk scenarios, ensuring that trainees are equipped with the skills to make a real difference. Alongside training, Ahmed oversees critical operational areas, including procurement, where efforts are focused on reducing the cost of raw materials without compromising quality.

The company's ambitious expansion, supported by new R&D, will bolster its capacity for projects like flood management vehicles capable of relocating water in disaster-stricken regions. "Innovative solutions are the cornerstone of our growth," Ali remarks. Continuous improvement is a core tenet of NAFFCO Group's philosophy. "We believe in learning from every project and using that knowledge to innovate further," says Ali. Sustainability initiatives, like eco-friendly fire suppression agents and hybrid rescue vehicles, further reinforce the company's forward-thinking approach.

NAFFCO GROUP'S SMOKE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Leading the world in providing complete unit responsibility as per NFPA



Smoke Extraction Fans



Smoke Detectors and Sensors



Fire/Smoke Damper



Fire Rated and G.I. Duct



Starter Panel and Smoke Control Station



Smoke Vents



Fixed and Automatic Fire and Smoke Curtain

NAFFCO Group's in-house capabilities, from design to production, ensure rigorous quality control. This dedication is reflected in the company's growing list of accolades for innovation and sustainability. "Every accolade is a reminder of our responsibility to lead by example," Eng. Khalid says.

The company's vision extends beyond products and systems to encompass global safety advocacy. By introducing advanced analytics and AI into fire safety systems, NAFFCO Group is shaping a future where technology and human expertise work seamlessly together. "We're not just meeting today's needs; we're shaping tomorrow's standards in saving lives, environment, and property," Eng. Khalid concludes.

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