

# FIRE SPRINKLER TIMES

Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board • Spring 2003 Edition



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**June 9, 2003**  
**8th Annual Illinois Burn Prevention Invitational**

- Use the enclosed "Fax Back" form to order materials
- Use the enclosed application to become a subscriber member of the NFSA

## Glenkirk Residents Will Be Safer in Home with Fire Sprinkler System

Eight residents and staff who live or work at the Glenkirk home for women with disabilities are now living in one of the only homes in Grayslake with a residential fire sprinkler system.

More than 80% of fire deaths occur in residential homes across the United States, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Children, seniors and people with disabilities are at a higher risk of dying in a house fire. Fire sprinklers are a particularly important safety measure for individuals with physical and mental disabilities who may not be able to react to a fire emergency quickly.

The project began when Fire Marshal Brett Henne, Grayslake Fire Protection District, approached Glenkirk with the idea of retrofitting the home with a fire sprinkler system. The property is a 4,400 sq. ft., single-story home with a basement.



*Frank X. Amstadt, Ahern Fire Protection, presents Glenkirk President, Alan Spector, with a certificate after the sprinkler system was activated. Chief Dave Danley, (from left to right) NIFSAB Fire Consultant, Spector, Amstadt and Grayslake Chief Don Mobley.*

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## Child Safety Spurs Builder to Protect New Home with Fire Sprinklers

Seven months after a fire destroyed their home, the Zibrat family of six is ready to move into their new house in Lombard – complete with a residential fire sprinkler system – thanks to builder Rich Laurenzana of R&S Custom Homes, NIFSAB for donating the system and Cybor Fire Protection for donating the installation.

Laurenzana's experience with sprinklers began with the installation of a system last year at his children's school, Sacred Heart, in Lombard.

"Parents believe that their kids are very safe in school – and they aren't," Laurenzana said.

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*Builder Rich Laurenzana (left) with the Zibrat family in front of their new home, complete with a fire sprinkler system.*



# NIFSAB Updates

by Tom Lia, NIFSAB Executive Director

## Preface to Our Elected Officials

**“It is up to code.”**  
**“It was grandfathered.”**

Those famous words are heard everyday in a multitude of municipalities across the country. But, as we have seen again and again, “up to code” and “grandfathered” can be the equivalent of a “legal fire trap.”

The fire tragedy in the West Warwick, R.I., nightclub will echo in our memory for a while, along with the Chicago Epitome nightclub stampede. But the 99 deaths in the R.I. fire and the 21 deaths in the Chicago incident should not go in vain. When the fire

and building safety experts in your municipality—including your fire commissioner, fire chief, fire marshal, fire inspector—and building department personnel, advise you that fire code upgrades need to be adopted or enforced, you need to take their advice very seriously.

As a former fire marshal for the Orland

Fire District, past president of the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association and current director of the Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, I urge you to support your fire and building officials as they seek to upgrade the codes. As importantly, they need your support when they enforce fire features in any occupancy that at least meet the model code minimum requirements.

Reflecting on the Chicago Epitome incident, appropriate panic hardware was installed on some exit doors. Unfortunately, a slide bolt was installed above the doors which resulted in trapped occupants when engaged. Even if we adopt good fire and building codes, interference with the enforcement process results in a “paper tiger” fire code.

The dramatic video footage from the West Warwick nightclub fire showed the speed and devastation of flashover. The club was engulfed in flames within three min-

utes after the on-stage pyrotechnics display spread to the adjacent sound-deadening foam. The club had been inspected just two months prior to the February 20th tragedy.

After the fire, officials reported that an automatic fire sprinkler system was not required for the club due to the limited size of the structure. The official 300-occupant load trigger was not met. Because of “grandfathering,” fire sprinklers were not installed.

**I urge you to support your fire and building officials as they seek to upgrade the codes.**

**They need your support when they enforce codes for fire features that at least meet the model code minimum requirements.**

Immediately after that fire, a full-scale burn test was conducted in a lab using polyurethane foam wall material similar to the material hung on the walls at the R.I. nightclub. The test confirmed that a single automatic fire sprinkler would have controlled or stopped the fire.

Unfortunately, it often takes a tragedy for people to understand the need to require automatic fire sprinkler protection for all public assembly buildings where crowds gather. Building codes require a certain number of exits based on the assumption they will be available and used, but secondary exits can be useless when a fast-developing fire results in crowd panic. Automatic fire sprinklers are capable of controlling or suppressing a fire in its early stages, preventing the type of fast-developing fire that resulted in the Rhode Island deaths.

Listen to your fire commissioners, fire chiefs and building directors. Ask them what they think about proper fire protection. Stop this overt political pressure and let your code officials do what is right for the people of your community.

Is it up to code or is it a legal death trap? How you allow your fire chief and building director to do their job is the answer. ■

## Danley's Desk

**By Dave Danley**  
**NIFSAB Fire Safety Consultant**  
**Serving Lake and McHenry County**

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### Don't Amend Yourself Out of the Code

Nearly all building and fire codes are adopted with local amendments. Generally these amendments are formulated to solve a problem. Often the problem exists as a result of enforcement or disagreement on interpretation of the code. Amendments may address specific needs of the jurisdiction, local experience or new technology to specifically address a safety consideration or any number of other considerations.

Residential fire sprinkler codes are no exception. When considering amendments to the residential sprinkler code or standard, keep in mind the intent or scope of the code. The residential sprinkler standards were developed in NFPA 13D specifically for one and two family residential structures. The standard was developed to provide a cost-effective installation of a fire sprinkler system that is expected to prevent flashover (total involvement) in the room of fire origin and to improve the chance for occupants to escape or be evacuated.

Amendments to the standard residential sprinkler code that expand its scope (intent) beyond that of the technical standard for installation should be weighed against the intended benefit.

Increasing coverage in areas not required by the standard and restriction of listed materials can substantially increase the cost of the installation. One of the considerations in the development of the one and two family residential sprinkler code was cost. Cost has been a major challenge to existing and proposed residential sprinkler codes.

Each jurisdiction should carefully evaluate the justification for all amendments or code requirement that increase cost. Amendments that clearly address local conditions, such as water supply, weather

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# Fire Sprinklers at Work: SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS

**AUGUST 2002:**

## Historic Chapel

**Glenview**

According to Bernie Arends, director of fire prevention, Glenview Fire Department, a single fire sprinkler saved one of the most unique and historic buildings at the former Glenview Naval Air Station. When firefighters arrived, they found light smoke. The sprinkler activated over a furnace that overheated when the thermal limiter switch failed.

Now known as the Schram Memorial Museum, the chapel served the base for over seventy years and was the scene for thousands of military weddings.

Former director of fire prevention Captain George Michehl insisted that the all-frame building be retrofitted with a fire sprinkler system when it was moved to its new location. The chapel is a focal point in a two billion dollar reuse of the 1200 acre naval air installation. "It would have been a tragic loss for us and all of Glenview," said a Park District official speaking on behalf of the new owners and managers of the facility. He said they really appreciated the fact that Captain Michehl required the fire sprinklers and saved the historic structure for future generations.

**SEPTEMBER 2002:**

## Mario Tricoci's Salon

**Oak Brook, Daily Herald**

The Oakbrook Fire Department responded to an alarm at the Mario Tricoci's Salon at 5:14 a.m. Fire sprinklers confined the fire to a laundry area until crews could locate and extinguish it. The fire is believed to have started in a dryer.

*Debra Jarvis, Fire Chief, Oakbrook Fire Dept.*

**OCTOBER 2002:**

## Presidential Tower Fire

**Champaign, IL, The News-Gazette**

Fire sprinklers that were added when the building was remodeled extinguished a fire in Champaign's tallest building. According to Dena Schumacher, spokesperson for the Champaign Fire Department, the fire started in a trash chute. "The sprinkler system put the fire out without any damage to the building," Schumacher said. As many as 300 residents and guests were evacuated but allowed to return in about an hour. No one was injured.

Ironically, the Champaign and Urbana fire departments were hosting a fire sprinkler demonstration the day after the fire. The demonstration was planned because the

Champaign department is considering whether to recommend an ordinance requiring sprinklers in buildings such as dormitories, high-rise buildings over 75 feet, nursing homes and apartment buildings with more than 96 units.

**DECEMBER 2002:**

## Anchor Brake Shoe

**West Chicago, Daily Herald**

A fire sprinkler system extinguished an early morning fire at Anchor Brake Shoe, manufacturers of brake shoes for railroad cars. According to Lt. Mike Hamlin, West Chicago Fire Department, an employee reporting to work found the business filled with smoke and called the fire department. A motor that pumps oil for one of the machines was left on over the holidays and caught fire. The sprinkler system extinguished the fire. The fire alarm system was not connected to any company because the business was in the middle of changing alarm companies, Hamlin said.

## Auto Dealership

**Bridgeview**

The Bridgeview Fire Department responded to an automatic alarm at an auto dealership. Upon arrival and investigation, it was found that employees were cleaning the interior of a "flammable liquids" room adjacent to a spray-booth area. They used a non-rated electric floor-scrubbing machine causing a flash fire. A single sprinkler activated and extinguished the fire.

According to Bureau Chief John Rutkowski, this is another example of what automatic sprinklers and alarm systems can do when it comes to life safety and property preservation from fire.

*Chief Terrence Lipinski, Bridgeview Fire Dept.*

**JANUARY 2003:**

## Great American Bagel

**Westmont, Westmont Progress**

Fire sprinklers controlled a fire and prevented the spread of flames to neighboring stores at the Great American Bagel on Odgen Avenue in Westmont. Westmont Fire Department Lt. Craig Skala said they received an alarm at 3:25 a.m. When firefighters arrived, they found the automatic sprinkler system had contained the fire to a small area of the restaurant.

"Two sprinklers activated and helped control the fire and put the fire out," Skala said.

Without the sprinkler system, Skala said the fire could have easily spread through the store and into neighboring stores before firefighters arrived, or even before anyone noticed the flames.

Fire investigators said the source of the fire was from an electrical short in an outlet near a refrigerator unit.

*Chief Frank Trout, Westmont Fire Dept.*

## Lexington Nursing Home

**Orland Park**

A single fire sprinkler prevented a fire from spreading at the Lexington Nursing Home where 249 senior citizens currently reside. Firefighters from the Orland Fire Protection District arrived at the scene and found a fire in a dryer. They extinguished the remaining fire with a dry chemical extinguisher. A spokesperson from the fire department said the fire sprinklers prevented potential injuries and death, protecting the senior citizen residents, the staff and firefighters.

*Chief Bob Buhs, Orland Fire Prot. District*

**MARCH 2003:**

## Storage Building

**Libertyville**

According to the Libertyville Fire Department, a fire started at the Libertyville Parks Department storage building. The fire sprinkler system activated and extinguished the fire. Because the building had a bow string roof and pesticides were stored inside it, the fire would have easily overrun the building resulting in over \$1 million in losses including all of the park department equipment. Fire sprinklers kept the damage to less than \$500.

*Chief Bob Kleinheinz, Libertyville Fire Dept.*

**OUTSIDE OF ILLINOIS**

## Fire Sprinklers Protect NBC's West Wing Set

**Hollywood, CA, Associated Press**

Fire sprinklers controlled a fire caused by a faulty overhead light on the set of NBC's Emmy-winning White House drama "The West Wing." According to Burbank Fire Marshal David Starr, a halogen light burst, sprinkling flaming material onto a layer of muslin that diffuses the illumination. Fire sprinklers doused the flames as about 100 people fled the building. The sprinklers contained the flames until firefighters arrived to extinguish them. The stages involved were the White House situation room and a cafeteria setting.

## Save the Date!

8th Annual Illinois  
Burn Prevention Invitational



June 9, 2003

### \$50 Raffle Tickets

Proceeds benefit the Illinois Burn Camp for Kids and Loyola Burn Unit

### 1st Prize: Trip for Four to London & Paris

Includes deluxe hotel accommodations, air fare & rental car for 3 nights in London and then 3 nights in Paris (valued at \$10,000).

### 2nd Prize: Sony 50" XBR Grand Wega TV

A 50" high-definition, color, flat-screen TV from Sony (valued at \$4,000).

### 3rd Prize: Weekend for Two in Chicago

Includes 2 nights at the Four Seasons Hotel, champagne, breakfast in bed, dinner at Seasons Restaurant and a \$500 American Express Gift Card for a Magnificent Mile shopping spree (valued at \$3,000).

Only 1,000 tickets will be sold!  
Raffle to be held at the golf outing event

For more information or to reserve tickets,  
contact NIFSAB: 708-403-4468. ■

## Fire Sprinklers Allow Libertyville Development to Keep Single Entrance

According to Chief Bob Kleinheinz, Libertyville Fire Department, the new Liberty Grove Development will not need a second entrance/exit because all 30 row houses and 18 single-family cluster homes will have fire sprinkler systems.

Kleinheinz said without fire sprinklers, there's a concern about fire equipment response to a fire when there is only one-way in and out of a gated community.

"As an architect, life-safety is our first consideration," said the developer, Rick Swanson, R.M. Swanson Development. When it comes to residential fire sprinkler systems, Swanson admits there's a perception problem. "When I first heard about resident fire sprinklers, I thought of commercial systems," he added. "After I did research and learned about how home fire sprinklers are designed, I realized fire sprinklers are a very good solution." ■

## Ten Years Later...

# Senator, Newspaper Columnist and Fire Chief Watch School Fire Safety Act Become Law

More than ten years of work, research, lobbying and testifying paid off for a fire chief and his staff, a state senator, newspaper columnist and various fire service personnel when Governor George Ryan signed Public Act 92-593 – the "Fire Safety Check in Public Schools" into law. As a result, safer schools are being built in Illinois, ultimately protecting students, faculty and firefighters.

It began in 1991 when Chief Bob Buhs, Orland Fire District, tried to convince the superintendent of a rapidly growing school district that new schools should include fire sprinkler systems. The superintendent chose not to use Life Safety Code Bonds to have fire sprinklers and standpipes installed in the school. Instead, those funds were reserved for additional carpeting, HVAC and aesthetics purposes. After referendums requiring sprinklers did not pass, Buhs decided to take the cause statewide.

State Senator William Maher and Rep. Mary Lou Cowlshaw sponsored the initial legislation. Tom O'Connell from the National Fire Sprinkler Association, the Illinois Fire Inspectors, and the Illinois Fire Chiefs all backed the measure, but movement was stalled in Governor Edgar's office.

Phil Kadner, *Daily Southtown* columnist, ran a series of nine articles questioning why schools were not sprinklered. He pointed out in his columns that warehouses, grocery stores and state prisons had better fire protection with sprinklers than our children in school buildings. As a result, Governor Edgar called Kadner in 1992 to personally tell him he was signing the bill as they spoke. Since then, more than 200 schools have been built with fire sprinkler systems.

Ten years later, Mahar introduced the legislation for a new bill requiring fire departments to inspect public equipment after problems with renovation projects within school districts in Palos, Orland Park and Tinley Park. Before the bill passed, local fire officials played no role at all when a new school was built or an existing school expanded. School safety inspections were conducted by the regional school superintendent's office.

Former Chief Allenspach, Fire Marshal Troy Shannon and Fire Inspector Skip Hart of Buffalo Grove Fire Department, were concerned about problem in Buffalo Grove schools which were undergoing renovations and additions and attempting to keep from having to com-

ply with the sprinkler law. After bringing this issue into the open, other fire departments related their problems with their schools.

According to Palos Fire Protection District Inspectors, Sandburg High School had numerous fire code violations in its renovation and new addition. The Regional Superintendent of Schools followed up with his own inspection and gave a "clean" bill of health to the school, allowing it to open ignoring the fire district's inspection reports.

Mahar was concerned when he realized local fire officials had no authority in the schools. With the assistance of an Advisory Board made up members of the Palos Fire Department, Orland Fire Prevention District, Tinley Park Fire Department, NIFSAB and the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association, he recommended the basic codes and language on the proposed new Senate Bill 1545.

Chief Buhs, Fire Marshal Tony Ugaste, Chief Michael Mitchell from the Godfrey Fire District, Rich Piccolo of B&F Technical Code Services and ICCA lobbyist Margaret Vaughn attended school subcommittee hearings in Springfield. Kadner again joined the fight and wrote another series of supportive articles until Governor Ryan signed Public Act 92-593 into law.

Thanks to their efforts, more schools will now have fire sprinklers, standpipes, fire lanes, alarms and connections. Most importantly, school children, faculty and responding firefighters are safer! ■

## Lake Zurich Earns Fourth Annual Life Safety Achievement Award

The Lake Zurich Fire/Rescue Department received its fourth annual **Life Safety Achievement Award** by the Residential Fire Safety Institute (RFSI).

According to RFSI, although residential fires account for 20% of all fires in the U.S., they result in 80% of all fire deaths. The award recognizes local fire prevention activities that contribute to reducing the number of lives lost in residential fires. The Lake Zurich Fire/Rescue Department qualified for the award because it recorded zero fire deaths in structures during the year. ■

# The Struggle for Residential Fire Sprinklers

By Chief Jim Spiegel, Countryside Fire Protection District

It's approaching 1:00 am and here I sit at public hearing. I have provided testimony encouraging sprinkler systems in a new residential subdivision, a posh gated community. My testimony has focused on the benefits of providing built-in fire protection in the form of residential sprinklers vs. the cost to build, equipped and staff a new fire station estimated at six million dollars. In our district, the average cost for a sprinkler system, based on last year's new home construction, is about \$7,500. At this hour, neither the developer nor village wants to provide the fire sprinklers in the new homes. Sound familiar?

Fire sprinklers installed in new homes cost a village nothing, cost the developer and builder nothing (trade offs can actually save them money), cost our existing residents (tax-payers) nothing and are cost-effective to the fire department. Fire sprinklers, like lawn sprinklers or bonus rooms, are paid for entirely by the new homeowner. Yet most villages and cities do not include residential fire sprinklers in new homes, even when the homes cost in excess of \$800,000.

Many of the new homes in our area are the size of small businesses and are built with lightweight combustible beams and trusses. Our building codes and amendments need to address these changes. These structural components should be protected from the heat of a fire to prevent rapid and catastrophic failure. The new homeowners should be protected. The firefighters who respond to rescue the occupants and fight the fires should be protected. Existing residents should be protected from the potential need to fund a new fire station.

The concept of fire sprinklers as a building "option" to new homebuyers sounds nice, but does not attain our mission. Less than 15% of new homebuyers in the affluent market will install fire sprinklers as an option. More will choose to install lawn sprinklers for a similar cost. As reported by the National Fire Protection Association, 3,110 people died in home fires in 2001 and 3,420 in 2000. As fire chiefs, we are charged with protecting our citizens from fire and the harm it will do. As public officials, elected or appointed, we are charged with providing services to our citizens and providing a safe community. So why have we not changed our building codes to attain our missions? Why are we not united – fire chiefs, municipal leaders and builders – in providing fire sprinklers in all

new homes? The International Consumers Product Safety and Health Commission has set a goal to reduce all residential fire deaths to zero by 2020. So what's a fire chief to do?

Re-energize your commitment to fire sprinkler systems. Complete a risk/benefit assessment and demonstrate the cost benefits of fire sprinkler systems in new construction.

Back to my 1:00 AM meeting. I remain optimistic in our endeavor, if not at this hearing, maybe the next. As fire chiefs, we need to continue to pursue our mission. We need to remind our public officials of their duties and mission. We need to protect our citizens from fire and its deadly effects.

The State of Illinois does not support fire protection districts to levy a developer impact without the support of a municipality. Currently, a bill is working its way through the house that would provide this ability. The State of Illinois, as interpreted by this county's officials, does not support a fire district's adoption and enforcement of fire sprinkler codes. Again, this currently requires support of the municipal/village or county adoption and enforcement. This interpretation is currently under legal challenge at the appellate level. ■

## Many Benefit From Donated Home

Thanks to Ray Whalen, president, Ray Whalen Builders, Inc., a charity, community and new homeowners will benefit from a home he is building in Glen Ellyn.

Whalen, along with a number of subcontractors, is donating services to build the home. NIFSAB is donating the fire sprinkler system. Noveon is donating the BlazeMaster pipe. And, the Fire Sprinkler Contractors Local #281 is donating the labor to install the fire sprinklers.

After the sprinkler system is installed, an open house will be scheduled allowing members of the community to see the system firsthand.

When the house is complete, it will be sold. The proceeds will be donated to Bridge Communities, Inc., a private, not-for-profit transitional housing and mentoring program in DuPage County. The Bridge program provides homeless families or those at-risk of becoming homeless with a base of housing and supportive services. ■

## NFSA Midwest Notes

By Dan Gengler, NFSA Midwest Regional Manager (IL, WI)

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Unfortunately it takes a major tragedy to increase public awareness about life-safety issues. The Rhode Island nightclub fire that resulted in 99 deaths is no exception. Our country watched the news footage in horror as the fire spread in less than three minutes. As a result, the public, elected officials and members of the fire service are questioning the codes that were developed to protect us from these tragedies. The single answer is simple: fire sprinklers save lives.

### CBS 60 Minutes II Strongly Supports Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems

Two weeks after the fire, the network news program **60 Minutes II** aired a story with a single theme – fire sprinklers save lives. Various interviews with fire officials, NFPA President Jim Shannon and an NFPA Committee member agreed there is a need for fire sprinklers in places of public assembly. Miami Beach Fire Chief Floyd Jordan said that it's time to change the code and noted his belief that the majority of the country's fire chiefs would agree.

One of the most telling facts shown in the program was the comparison of the Rhode Island tragedy with a fire in Minneapolis one week earlier under virtually identical circumstances. In that incident, twelve fire sprinklers extinguished the fire and not a single life was lost.

Much of the program focused on the NFPA code setting a threshold occupancy of 300 occupants in order to require a fire sprinkler system. As a result, the NFPA called an emergency meeting March 13th to consider its public assembly codes.

### IAFC Address NFPA Technical Committee on Assembly Occupancies

At the NFPA Technical Committee meeting, Chief Jackie Gibbs, Chairman of the Fire & Life Safety Section of the IAFC, said the RI fire is a clear indication of the need for the code development process to change the way it looks at fire and life safety within the U.S.

Chief Gibbs said that while we cannot control human behavior and the misjudgments that are often made that result in such catastrophic loss, we could, through the applica-

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# Glenkirk Home First with Fire Sprinklers

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Working with the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB), the entire sprinkler system was donated. Ahern Fire Protection donated the labor. BlazeMaster Fire Systems and Viking SupplyNet donated the pipe, fittings and sprinklers and Chicago Backflow donated the backflow preventer.

Grayslake Fire Chief Don Mobley and Glenkirk President Alan Spector toured the house to get a firsthand look at the system during the final day of installation.

"When I first heard about this project, I really wasn't sure what to expect," Spector said. "In my mind, I pictured the type of systems found in commercial buildings. Then I had a quick education and learned about the advances in technology involved in residential



*Chief Don Mobley and Chief Dave Danley check out the riser in the basement of the Glenkirk home right after the system was activated.*

fire sprinkler systems," he added. "I was pleasantly surprised at how the system looks with the plastic pipe and small sprinklers."

Henne and Spector both agreed that the sprinkler system is important because it will protect the residents, staff and firefighters.

"In this house, our staff is trained in case of emergencies," Spector said. "Someone is awake 24 hours a day and capable of helping. By having a fire sprinkler system, staff will have added protection and adequate time to help the residents escape."

When it comes to educating people about residential fire sprinklers, Henne said the biggest challenge is dispelling common myths. "Most people think the entire system is activated when there is a fire," he added. "Each sprinkler is individually activated by heat, so only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate and put out or control the fire."

Glenkirk, headquartered in Northbrook, offers growth opportunities to people of all ages with developmental disabilities. Glenkirk's mission is to provide quality, lifetime support and services, which empower individuals with developmental disabilities to participate fully in all areas of community life.

"We are always looking for ways to enhance our services," Spector said. "Fire sprinklers and life safety fits in with our mission. We can't thank Ahern enough for the work they did designing and installing this system, and Brett for working with the Sprinkler Board to arrange all the donated material and supplies." ■

## Code Updates

### NFPA 5000 Meets ISO Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule

NFPA 5000, Building Construction and Safety Code, meets the criteria of the ISO for its Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule. NFPA 5000 is the first building code developed through a process accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Jurisdictions that adopt NFPA 5000 are now eligible for the maximum points available.

ISO evaluates building code adoption and enforcement efforts within jurisdictions and provides classifications to insurers to assist them in their underwriting and rating of individual properties.

"ISO serves in an important role evaluating the effectiveness of both the provisions and enforcement of codes for public safety and property protection," said NFPA President James M. Shannon. "Compliance with ISO is

testament to the hard work of the 400 volunteers who worked to develop the world's first ANSI-approved building code."

### An Historic Day in Code Enforcement

In what was described as "the most historic day in code enforcement in 100 years," the consolidation of the International Code Council (ICC) combined more than 190 years of building and fire safety code development and 30 years of anticipation for one set of codes for use across the country.

At a special ceremony held in Las Vegas in January, the ICC became one consolidated organization when directors signed documents to create a unified organization from Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). ■

## Fire Departments Suffer Major Losses Without Fire Sprinklers

Both Fillmore and Des Plaines Fire Departments suffered major equipment losses after fires in structures that did not have fire sprinkler protection.

The Fillmore Fire Department, located in Montgomery County, lost all of their equipment after fire gutted their station last December. Their losses include a pumper, 15 sets of gear, boots, portable hand held units, medical supplies, hoses, 16 SCBAs (self-contained breathing apparatus) and a breathing air system. Fillmore Fire Department serves a geographical area of 80 square miles, including both Montgomery and Fayette Counties in Illinois.

The Des Plaines fire and police departments and Emergency Management Agency (EMA) lost more than \$500,000 in equipment after a fire destroyed a 6,000 square foot storage shed in January. Hardest hit was EMA, which lost its large command trailer and truck with radios and power supply, two light trailers, one small trailer with a power plant and generator and other equipment used to coordinate all other emergency agencies at disaster sites. The Police Department lost its mobile command centers, a converted mobile home that carried computer and radio communications equipment. The fire department lost its "Smoke House" used to teach school children fire safety and a 1955 restored fire truck donated to the department for parades and educational use.

Ironically, fire sprinklers prevented a similar disaster in a Libertyville Parks Department storage building. (See "Successful Activations" on page 3.) ■

## Danley's Desk

*continued from page 2*

condition and accessibility to property are usually easily defended. Those that intend to increase the ability of the system to extinguish a fire may require considerably more supportive information.

The momentum toward single-family residential fire sprinklers is continuing to grow. When considering amending your code or proposing a new one, consider a comparison with other existing jurisdictions that have residential codes in place. Draw on their experiences and use them as a supporting resource for your code. ■

# Fire Sprinklers Protect Lombard Home

*continued from page 1*

Laurenzana referred to the tragic 1958 fire at Our Lady of Angels School in Chicago where 90 students and three nuns died. His good friend Art Peters, Lombard Fire Inspector, whose children also attend Sacred Heart School, shared his concerns. Together, the two men raised a large part of the funding necessary to install sprinklers in the 80 year-old school building.

Ironically, a few months after the sprinkler system was installed, a single sprinkler prevented a kitchen fire from spreading to the old gym and the rest of the school.

"It should be a state law for certain buildings, such as schools, to have sprinkler systems," Laurenzana said. "I think every occupied building should be sprinklered."

After completing the school project, Laurenzana went on the lookout for the right residential sprinkler application because he felt that the best way to gain home sprinkler system installation experience.

"I see myself as a trendsetter – not a follower," Laurenzana said. "I like to be ahead of the crowd – not catching up and complaining."

When approached by Lori and Steven Zibrat to rebuild their home, Laurenzana knew he had found the right match.

Seven months earlier, the Zibrats woke up to the sound of a smoke alarm at 2:30 a.m. They were able to wake their four children and escape without injury, but the fire moved so quickly that there was no time to rescue any belongings. Lombard firefighters were able to save only one family photo album.

"These are wonderful people – a terrific family," Laurenzana said. "Losing your home and belongings is so devastating."

According to Lori Zibrat, their kids had real concerns after the experience. "Rich was so concerned that he decided to put sprinklers in for our son," she said.

Laurenzana said working with Rich Ray, Cybor Fire Protection, on his first residential system installation was a good learning experience. It meant becoming familiar with pricing schedules, working with a new type of subcontractor, and learning about village requirements as well as NFPA standards.

"It's like any of the trades – the more installations we do, the more comfortable I'll become with this feature," he said.

As fire inspector, Peters knows fire's devastation. He was on duty the night of the Zibrat fire. He also knows the benefits of fire sprinklers.

"Commercial sprinkler systems have saved lives and property here in Lombard a number of times," Peters said.

Lombard Fire Marshal Ron Rakosnik has the proof. After a fire in a building protected with a sprinkler system, Rakosnik keeps the sprinkler heads. He has more than ten sprinklers on display, recovered from local buildings that had fires.

According to Peters, each time sprinklers worked to not only keep the fire in check, but also allowed more time for people to escape and reduced the fire, smoke and water damage.

"Last Mother's Day, the Terrace Banquet Hall had a kitchen fire early in the morning," Peters said. "Because the building had fire sprinklers, they went on to open for business as usual."

Encouraged by this type of documented experience, the Lombard Fire Department is committed to raising awareness about the benefits of fire sprinkler systems and extending this type of fire protection to new homes.

According to Jim Plunket, Lombard Fire Department public information and education officer, individuals have a 90% chance of surviving a fire in a home that has both a fire sprinkler system and smoke alarms.

"What value do we put on a human life?" Plunket questioned. "Homeowners and their builders need to put the value of a fire sprinkler system into perspective."

"You can compare the cost of a system to upgrades that are routinely budgeted in a new construction project," he added. "Isn't family safety more important than a higher grade of carpeting or an additional fireplace? These upgrades tend to be far more costly than sprinklers."

The Zibrats, along with their extensive support system of family, friends and neighbors, are thankful that their new home has a fire sprinkler system.

"I'm very grateful that we have this extra layer of protection with the sprinkler system in our new home," Lori Zibrat said. "It gives us, and the children, added peace of mind." ■

## Scottsdale 15-Year Summary

**January 1, 1986:** passed residential ordinance.

**January 1, 2001:** 51% (more than 40,000) single-family homes are protected with residential fire sprinklers.

**49 fires** in single-family homes with fire sprinklers:

- Over \$20 million potential loss;
- \$106,110 actual loss;
- \$2,166 average loss per sprinkler incident.

**13 Lives Saved!**

# NFSA Midwest Notes

*continued from page 5*

tion of basic technology, control how a building will react in an emergency event. He identified specific actions for the future. The first action was that all NFPA codes must address the requirements that new commercial buildings, especially places of assembly, be equipped with fire sprinklers and monitored alarm systems. No exceptions. His second action stated that the concept of "grandfathering" must be eliminated from the codes for all target hazard buildings and occupancies.

## Rep. Weldon and Rep. Langevin Lead New Initiative for Sprinklers in Public Assemblies

On the same day as the NFPA meeting, Congressmen Curt Weldon (R-PA) and James Langevin (D-RI) held a press conference to call for increased fire safety at public events. Accompanied by some survivors of the RI nightclub fire, Congressman Weldon noted that a simple fire sprinkler system could have turned the horrific tragedy into an early end of the performance. The two legislators announced formation of a task force to draft legislation that would provide tax relief incentives to owners of older buildings who retrofit them with fire sprinklers.

Rep. Weldon praised the work that has already been done by NFSA's Director of Public Fire Protection, Jim Dalton, and said that it would form the basis for the task force's work. He said, "...the longer we wait, the longer we continue to put lives at risk...If we can justify tax incentives to purchase certain types of automobiles or business investments, we can justify incentives for life-saving sprinkler systems."

With an audience of federal legislators, national media and the U.S. Capitol building in the background, Jim was privileged to describe a fire sprinkler demonstration using a trailer made available by NIFSAB. Congressman Weldon made special recognition to NIFSAB Executive Director Tom Lia and Joe Copeland, Orland Fire Protection, who towed the sprinkler trailer to Washington, D.C. all the way from Chicago.

For more information, contact Dan Gengler at 262-245-5258. ■



# Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board

www.firesprinklerassoc.org

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## Speaking Out

*"It's definitely a priority for me. I have already requested that the IAFC, the U.S. Fire Administration and representatives of the NAHB meet to discuss how we can collectively move forward with a joint initiative to promote the use of residential fire sprinkler systems."*

*– Chief Randy Bruegman, President  
International Association of Fire Chiefs*

For more information about fire sprinklers, contact Tom Lia, Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, 866-264-3722

You can also contact Tom via e-mail: [sprinktoml@aol.com](mailto:sprinktoml@aol.com)



## NIFSAB on WBBM and CLTV



*Retired Chief Dave Danley, Barrington, records a radio spot in the WBBM studio. Danley credits the Barrington elected officials for passing an ordinance requiring fire sprinklers in all new homes. Both the radio message and an ad running on CLTV promote the 12 Chicagoland communities who have fire sprinkler ordinances.*

## Trailer Goes to Washington



*Congressmen Curt Weldon (R-PA) and James Langevin (D-RI) held a press conference on Capitol Hill to call for increased fire safety at public events. NIFSAB Executive Director Tom Lia and Joe Copeland, Orland Fire Protection, towed the sprinkler trailer to Washington for the demonstration.*



# *We Support Our Troops!*