

FIRE SPRINKLER TIMES

Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board • Spring 2004 Edition



INSIDE:

**Wheeling Chief Named
Recipient of Wayne Leucht
Memorial Award**

See Page 5

NIFSAB Updates

NFSA Midwest Notes

Successful Activations

Fire & Water: Why Annual Pump Tests Can Save Lives

Matteson Becomes 15th Chicago Area Community to Pass Single-Family Fire Sprinkler Ordinance

NIFSAB Offers Free Scholarship Classes

RETRO SECTION: Frankfort Training Center

Countryside Message on New Truck

BURNING ISSUES: Support SB 2466 Fire Sprinkler Homestead Act

Dan Turner Joins Fire Sprinkler Board as Consultant

High-Rise Testimonials Heard on WBBM Radio

**Be sure to read the inserts
included with this issue!**

**There's a lot going on and
we want you to have this
important information at
your fingertips!**

NFPA 25 Belongs On Your Code Adoption To-Do List

Two years ago, Illinois adopted the 2000 Edition of NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code*,[®] updating statewide requirements to reflect performance-based codes and more current NFPA standards.

This was a major public safety improvement for the State, but more remains to be done. Because Illinois permits municipalities to develop and adopt fire safety regulations, you don't have to wait for another statewide code adoption effort to move forward assertively.

If your jurisdiction has not yet adopted NFPA 25, *Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems*, this is a good place to start. Referenced in the *Life Safety Code* in Section 9, this widely used national consensus standard is adopted in 30 states, although not yet Illinois. And, it's an important component in your suite of sprinkler system requirements.

Sprinkler usage is growing in most occupancies and many jurisdictions prefer to establish the requirements of NFPA 25 through specific adoption, opposed to through reference via the *Life Safety Code*.

The first edition of NFPA 25 issued in 1992 is now in its 2002 Edition. The standard addresses minimum requirements for effective care of water-based fire protection systems, including sprinkler, standpipe and hose, fixed water spray, foam water, and other land-based and marine systems. Inspection, testing and maintenance in the standard represent the minimum necessary requirements. This allows authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) the leeway to require more frequent care if they see fit.

continued on page 6



Chief Lindsay Laycoax and firefighter/paramedic Tom Jones, Oak Forest Fire Department, inspect a backflow assembly.

Backflow Testing – Part of Effective Sprinkler System Care

Backflow prevention devices – which are installed between the water supply and fire sprinkler systems – while sometimes thought of as part of the fire protection system are actually plumbing system valves. In the State of Illinois, their installation is mandated to protect drinking water from fire protection system back siphonage or back pressure.

They are not required for fire protection purposes, but rather to protect potable water supplies. Scheduled testing of backflow assemblies is

continued on page 7



NIFSAB Updates

by Tom Lia, NIFSAB Executive Director

Contact Tom at 866-264-3722 or e-mail: sprinktoml@aol.com

Kudos to the Chief... who believes life-safety of students, teachers and staff is a priority

The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board wishes to offer our moral support to the former chief of the Godfrey Fire Protection District for his actions to protect the students and staff at a local school.

Last September the former Chief became involved in a case where the water purveyor advised that they were going to shut off the water supply to an area that included a local school. This is an action that could endanger the students and staff since it would cut off the water supply to the school's fire sprinkler system. The chief asked the water company if they could do the work in the evening or over the weekend so the school wouldn't have to close. As an alternative, the chief requested a "fire watch" while the water system was turned off.

According to International Fire Code 2003 Section 508.1 *required water supply*, "an approved water supply capable of supplying the required flow for fire protection shall be provided to premises upon which facilities, buildings or portions of buildings are hereafter constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction. Without that water supply the sprinkler system and nearby fire hydrants cannot operate. The codes supported the chief's request.

Chapter 1 Administration Section 102.8 *matters not provided for*, states that "requirements that are essential for public safety of an existing or proposed activity for the safety of the occupants thereof which are not specifically provided for in this code shall be determined by the code official". That code official in Godfrey was the Chief!

As a former fire marshal, I am particularly sensitive when a member of the fire service must deal with political pressure. In this case, I ask the following questions:

Did the Board of Trustees of the District undertake an executive action not normally reserved for a legislative body?

Did the water company assume liability by shutting down the water main to the school?

Were the fire safety concerns of the students given proper consideration?

On a more positive note, St. Charles East High School was closed by the St. Charles

Fire Department as a safety precaution last December due to a water line break. It is good news to hear that St. Charles East school board members, school principal and the St. Charles Fire Department were able to come to a consensus for the safety of the students and staff.

Especially since the September 11th terrorists attacks, fire departments are considered by the Federal Emergency Management Association to be our first line of defense against external attack. Maybe in Godfrey they need to be protected from internal attacks and listen to the recommendation of the Fire Chief. ■

NFSA Midwest Notes

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

Contact Dan at 262-245-5255 or e-mail: danNFSA@aol.com • www.NFSAwi.org

Springfield Updates

Dormitory Act Will Make Dorms Safer with Low-Interest Loans

The Dormitory Act requires Illinois universities to install fire sprinklers in all dormitories by 2013. The Dormitory Revolving Loan Fund provides for the Illinois Finance Authority and the Board of Higher Education to administer the loan program and allows institutions to levy a surcharge on student fees to repay loans. The Dormitory Act has been referred to the Executive Committee that will assign it to a committee for hearing.

"Administrative Rule Package" of the Illinois Fire Sprinkler Contractor Act Moves to Final Approval

The package was presented to the Joint Committee Administering Rules (JCAR) in early March with a hopeful passage in May. If done, the Office of the State Fire Marshal will have another 90 days of open enrollment to get all contractors interested in obtaining the license to register, provide verification that they have been in the business for more than three years or having a NICET certified employee.

A company will be licensed once fees are paid. Those fees are projected to be a \$250 filing fee and a \$1,000 license fee. Applicants must also prove they have been designing and installing systems more

than infrequently in order to qualify. With no snafus, it is anticipated the act will become effective by September 1, 2004.

ON THE HILL

Support HR1824: Fire Sprinkler Act

It's vital that Congress pass HR 1824 because it provides a substantial tax benefit to building owners who install or retrofit property with fire sprinklers. Rep. Curt Weldon (R-PA) and Rep. James Langevin (D-RI) introduced HR 1824 last April.

The bill will amend the 1986 Internal Revenue Code to classify automatic fire sprinkler systems as five-year property for the purpose of depreciation. The shorter period of depreciation will encourage the retrofit of existing depreciable property by offering a quicker "pay back." For instance, if this legislation passes, a \$100,000 sprinkler system can be depreciated at \$44,000 in the first year with the remainder deducted over the balance of the five years. Currently, the tax treatment in some cases may take up to 39 years for the full depreciation.

Contact your representative today and ask him or her to support HR 1824. ■

Fire Sprinklers at Work: SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS

NOVEMBER 2003

Restaurant

Lisle, *Daily Herald*

A fire sprinkler system prevented a fire from spreading in the kitchen at The Fox Restaurant on Main Street. Fifteen occupants had been in the apartment building above the restaurant and in adjacent stores at the time of the fire. All got out safely when the alarms went off. According to Bureau Chief Jim French, the fire was held to the kitchen area, and there was minor damage to the restaurant.

Jim French, Bureau Chief,
Lisle-Woodridge Fire Department

Hines Hospital

Broadview, *Countryside Weekly*

A fire in a storage closet was quickly extinguished by a fire sprinkler at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, located next to Loyola University Medical Center, according to Broadview Fire Chief John Tierney.

Hines Public Affairs Officer Maureen Bossch said the closet was in the hospital's main building, and that none of the patients or staff were evacuated.

John Tierney, Chief, Broadview Fire Dept.

DECEMBER 2003

Pub

Geneva, *St. Charles Daily Herald*

Fire sprinklers quickly extinguished a small grease fire in the kitchen at the Claddagh Irish Pub around 9 p.m. According to Geneva Fire Lt. Kevin Forest, approximately 90 people were forced to evacuate. No injuries were reported. The Pub was cleaned and open for business the next morning. Damage was estimated at \$3,000.

Stephen Olson, Chief, Geneva Fire Dept.

JANUARY 2004

Factory

Chester, *Sparta News-Plain Dealer*

A fire was reported at 1:15 a.m., December 31st, in a storage area on the third floor at the Gilster-Mary Lee main factory. Chester Fire Chief Mike Lochhead said the sprinkler system did its job. He said fire damage was limited to a small area.

Mike Lochhead, Chief, Chester Fire Dept.

JANUARY 2004 (continued)

Office Building

Wood River, *The Telegraph*

The sprinkler system kept damage to a minimum when a fire broke out in a building at the Envirotech Business Park that houses offices for Telstar and Olin Corp.'s Winchester operations. Wood River Fire Chief Steve Alexander said that when firefighters arrived, it took them a few minutes to find the fire in a utility area off a large warehouse in Telstar's portion of the building. "The sprinkler system worked wonders," Alexander said. "It definitely did its job. The sprinkler system is designed strictly to keep the fire in check until we arrive, and that's what it did. Were it not for the sprinkler system, the damage would have been considerably higher." The building was unoccupied when the fire broke out, and no injuries were reported.

Steve Alexander, Fire Chief,
Wood River Fire Department

Manufacturing Plant

Des Plaines, *Des Plaines Journal*

According to Fire Chief Tom Farinella, firefighters responded to a call for assistance at Littlefuse, Inc. at 3:23 a.m. Once inside the building, firefighters noticed a fire in the plating room. The fire was contained by the building's sprinkler system and extinguished by firefighters using dry chemical extinguishers. Farinella believes the blaze was caused by a malfunction in the low liquid level switch located inside the plating tank.

Tom Farinella, Fire Chief, Des Plaines Fire Dept.

Car Dealership

East Dundee, *Daily Herald*

A fire sprinkler system extinguished most of a fire that broke out at Piemonte's Dundee Chevrolet, before firefighters arrived. According to Captain Doug Hoyt of the East Dundee and Countryside Fire Protection District, sparks from a car being repaired ignited flammable vapors in the air causing the fire. Fire officials said the fire damaged three cars and some shop equipment. No damage was reported to the dealership's showroom.

Mark Rakow, Fire Chief,
East Dundee Fire Protection District

FEBRUARY 2004

Multi-Family Dwelling

Blue Island Fire Department

A single fire sprinkler located in the furnace area of an apartment prevented a fire from spreading until firefighters arrived at the scene. According to Bob Copp, Blue Island Fire Department, careless use of smoking material caused a fire in a couch, which was approximately 11 feet from the furnace area. The sprinkler activated and kept the fire from spreading.

Dave Haywood, Fire Chief,
Blue Island Fire Department

Strip Mall

Arlington Heights

According to Brian Allen, Arlington Heights Fire Inspector, two fire sprinklers extinguished a fire in a couch in a unit located in a strip mall with multiple stores. A neon sign falling on the couch may have caused the fire. Firefighters who arrived on the scene found light smoke coming from the unit. Allen said this was a great example of how well sprinklers can save lives and structures.

Bruce Rodewald, Chief,
Arlington Heights Fire Department

Department Store

Skokie Fire Department

According to Wally Kueking, Skokie Fire Department, a single fire sprinkler extinguished a transformer fire at Marshall Fields before firefighters arrived on the scene. Leaking water caused a short and explosion. The store was closed for one day for electrical repairs.

Martin Oscarson, Chief, Skokie Fire Dept.

Heart Institute

Aurora Fire Department

A single sprinkler extinguished a fire in a mechanical room before firefighters arrived at the Rush Copley Heart Institute. According to Fire Marshal Jack Smith, the fire may have been caused by material stored too close to an appliance. No injuries were reported.

Roger Probst, Chief, Aurora Fire Department

SAVE-A-DAY

Use the new "Save-A-Day" successful activation form to report your "Successful Activation" stories to NIFSAB. See insert for a copy of the form or visit www.firesprinklerassoc.org and download a copy of the form.

Fire and Water: Why Annual Pump Tests Can Save Lives

By Jeffrey Zuk, Consultant at jeffreyzuk@aol.com

WATER. What a curious liquid it is. We take it for granted by flushing it down our toilets, spraying it on our lawns, letting it run out of our hoses while we soap up our cars, drinking half of a glass then dumping the rest down the drain.

Yet, a bottle of water will fetch a higher price than a soft drink. Whether we value it or waste it, we cannot deny the fact that water is one of the most important elements of our lives.

Now, try to imagine facing an inferno in your home, work place, restaurant or hotel. The heat is scorching, the smoke stifling. What is the one element that can swing the balance to life and blessed deliverance? WATER.

We are all partners in making sure that such an important resource is available when needed to suppress a fire. How do we do this? Obviously, the pipe and sprinkler systems are the conduit. If the pressure is adequate, all should be well for those in dire need. What if the pressure is not there?

If a fire pump is key to supply water at the pressure required, it becomes the most crucial part of keeping the balance of life in favor of the victims.

I mentioned earlier that we are all partners. By we, I include the contractors who install and maintain fire suppression systems, fire prevention bureaus that oversee the contractors and systems, testing contractors who have the sacred duty of insuring the dependability of various parts of a fire pump installation, building owners and managers who hold the trust of those occupying the buildings to make sure all diligence is practiced in seeking compliance with all codes, and village planning commissions to make sure they can supply the needed water to support those life safety systems.

Some may view annual fire pump tests as an inconvenience. Contractors struggle to get dates from fire prevention bureaus. Fire prevention bureaus struggle to cover the tests with limited manpower. Building owners hate to deal with the commotion and expense of something that seems so useless. City officials do not like the burden a fire pump test places on their water and sewer systems. The police don't like the impact to traffic flow.

Unless, of course, there is a fire. Then it's worth the effort. How much more valuable when we are the ones being saved by that deluge of water that

extinguishes the fire. How thankful the various "WE" are when the fire becomes personal.

MAKE THE FIRE PERSONAL. If you are part of the process of saving lives by verification of fire pump systems, contribute your best cooperation and your best skills to place your personal stamp of approval on every element you touch. Do not become a stumbling block to getting WATER to those who need it. Every fire pump protects someone. Everyone deserves to be given WATER when they need it. In order to do that, every fire pump must be tested every year. ■

Matteson Becomes 15th Chicago Area Community to Pass Single-Family Fire Sprinkler Ordinance

In an effort to increase fire safety and protect its citizens, the Matteson Village Board passed an ordinance requiring installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems in all new construction homes.

Under the direction of Fire Chief Robert Wilcox, the ordinance requires all new, single-family homes and townhouses to have home fire sprinklers installed according to NFPA 13D.

"Village President Mark Stricker and all village board trustees realized that this is the single most important thing they could do to provide a fire safe community," Wilcox said.

According to Wilcox, the ordinance is important because Matteson continues to experience steady growth. Some of those developments are high-density, while others have large homes.

"Our board is focusing on quality of life, Wilcox said. "They want Matteson to be a safe place to live, work and visit."

"Each member understood that passing this ordinance would clearly set themselves apart because they are the 15th municipality in the entire state to require fire sprinklers in homes," he added. "It's also exciting to be the first community in the south suburbs to pass this ordinance."

Wilcox believes ordinances that require residential fire sprinklers are the wave of the future because sprinklers help save lives, reduce fire-related property damage and protect firefighters who respond to house fires.

Other municipalities that require residential fire sprinklers include: Barrington, Berkeley, Clarendon Hills, Glen Ellyn, Hoffman Estates, LaGrange Park, Lake Barrington, Long

Grove, Mount Prospect, Park Ridge, Round Lake Beach, Streamwood, West Dundee and Wheeling. Several other communities are also progressing toward this goal.

Wilcox said many people played a major role during the education process. Lt. Jim Grosche from the Fire Prevention Bureau helped dispel myths associated with fire sprinklers. Village Administrator David Mekarski was also very supportive.

"I've never been more proud of any board like I am of this one," Wilcox said. "Village President Stricker and every trustee had a supportive commentary at the board meeting after they passed the ordinance. It took a great deal of courage for them to pass this ordinance."

Wilcox also worked closely with the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board.

Two years ago, while his own home was under construction, Wilcox held an open house. Working with NIFSAB, he invited city and village officials, planners, builders, developers and members of area fire departments to show how a residential fire sprinkler system is installed in a new home. NIFSAB supplied the educational material along with the fire sprinkler demonstration trailer to show how a fire sprinkler activates.

NIFSAB also provided national reports, PowerPoint programs, cost comparisons, insurance research, and other audio/visual support materials used to educate the elected officials.

For a copy of the presentation materials and ordinance used in Matteson, contact NIFSAB at (708) 403-4468 or email sprinktoml@aol.com. ■

NIFSAB Offers Free Scholarship Classes

For: Fire and Building Officials

Where: Lewis University, Oak Brook Campus

- June 8th: Sprinkler Protection for General Storage
- June 9th: Sprinkler Protection for Rack Storage
- June 10th: Inspection, Testing & Maintenance (NFPA 25)
- June 11th: Underground/Backflow

See insert for more details or contact NIFSAB, toll-free 866-264-3722

www.firesprinklerassoc.org

RETRO s e c t i o n

Frankfort Training Center

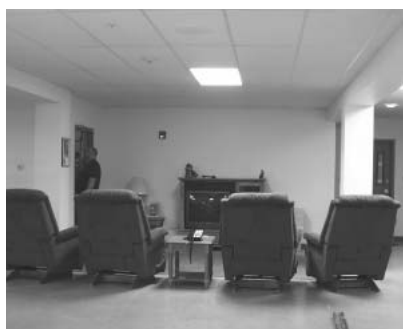
Six years since an agricultural shed was converted to a fire station and training center, the structure is now protected with a fire sprinkler system. The system was installed after the Frankfort Fire Protection District was awarded an Assistance to Firefighters grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

In addition to the fire district, the 30,000 sq. ft. building is used as a regional training center by other area fire departments, the Will County Sheriff's Department, Illinois State Police, Illinois Fire Service Institute, the Frankfort Police Department and the Civil Air Patrol.

The classroom is also used by the public who attend CPR training and other safety classes.



The Frankfort Fire Station and Training Center was retrofit with a fire sprinkler system. The 30,000 sq. ft. building includes a living area, truck bay, training classroom and training prop area.



"The fire sprinkler system provides a whole new level of comfort for our firefighters who sleep there and for those who attend the training center," said Frankfort's Chief James Grady.

"The fire sprinkler system provides a whole new level of comfort for our firefighters who sleep there and for those who attend the training center," said Frankfort's Chief James Grady.

Since the building was converted to a fire station and training center, Grady said they wanted the sprinkler system. He said it was a relief to receive the grant and finally install the system.

The building includes a living area, truck bay, training classroom and training prop area. The sprinkler installation began in early February and was completed in about six weeks. Grady said the retrofit went very smooth. ■

The RETRO-SECTION is a new feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights a special retrofit project. Contact Tom Lia to submit a special project.

Countryside Message on New Truck



Deputy Chief Jeff Steingart and Chief Jim Spiegel, Countryside Fire Protection District, in front of their new truck with the new logo they created. Chief Spiegel said the "Fire Sprinklers Save Lives" logo supports their commitment to saving the lives of their firefighters and residents through the use of fire sprinklers. The logo is part of the Pierce Manufacturing artwork group and can be requested by other fire departments.

Wheeling Chief Named Recipient of Wayne Leucht Memorial Award

The Northern Illinois Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) and the Illinois Fire Prevention Association (IFPA) announced that Keith Maclsaac, Fire Chief, Wheeling Fire Department, is the recipient of the NFSA's Wayne Leucht Memorial Award.



Keith Maclsaac, Fire Chief, Wheeling Fire Department

In memory of fallen firefighter Wayne Leucht, Fire Inspector from the Northbrook Fire Department, the award was created to recognize members of the local fire service who personify the spirit and dedication of the fire service. The recipients are also recognized for their efforts to increase the use and knowledge of

the life- and property-saving benefits of fire sprinklers in their communities.

"We are very happy to recognize Keith for this award," said Don Smith, Chairman of the Northern Illinois Chapter of the NFSA.

Referring to Wheeling's zero minimum sq. ft. requirement and residential ordinance, Smith added, "Because of Keith's dedication and hard work, Wheeling is first on the Illinois list of fire safe municipalities." Wheeling is also the only community that requires fire sprinklers in manufactured homes.

Maclsaac began his fire service career in 1976 and has since held numerous full-time and volunteer positions for several Illinois communities. He joined the Wheeling Fire Department as Fire Chief in 1990.

An advocate of residential fire sprinklers since the 1980s, Maclsaac is proud of his accomplishments. Approximately one-third of Wheeling's population lives in housing protected by fire sprinklers.

"Fire sprinkler protection is important in our town, Maclsaac said. "We have quite a few high-risk members of our population including older adults and young children. When you consider

continued on page 7

NFPA 25 Belongs on Your To-Do List *continued from page 1*

NFPA 25 outlines responsibilities of the building owner or operator, detailing specifics for care of varied systems through separate chapters. This outline includes addressing private fire service mains, fire pumps and water storage tanks. Additional chapters deal with Obstruction Investigation and Impairments. Appendices to the standard also list explanatory materials, forms and other useful information.

The deadly 1991 high-rise fire at the One Meridian Plaza building in Philadelphia remains a useful case study underscoring the necessity for adopting and enforcing NFPA 25, among other standards. According to Tom Klem, who investigated the fire for NFPA, "This fire serves as a memorable example of the need for vigilance in inspection, testing and maintenance of all water-based fire protection systems."

The fire resulted in the deaths of three firefighters and injuries to two dozen other people. Numerous failures—including inadequate water pressure in fire attack hose lines—hampered fire extinguishment.

Klem, now a fire protection engineering consultant heading up T. J. Klem & Associates, said, "Improper settings of the standpipe pressure regulating devices (PRVs) contributed to the severi-

ty of the One Meridian fire and the loss of life. The importance of adhering to national consensus standards such as NFPA 25 is obvious, and compliance with them can prevent similar tragedies."

If adopted and enforced in your jurisdiction, compliance with NFPA 25 will provide assurance that all the systems in your care remain well maintained and operational.

If you haven't already educated your elected officials about this important standard, now is the time! Bringing your jurisdiction a set of requirements to ensure routine testing of water-based fire protection systems is another step toward greater public safety for the people of Illinois.

Learn more: NFPA offers free FAQs on NFPA 25 by going online at: www.nfpa.org/Codes/Interpretations/FAQ25/FAQ25.asp. NFPA 25 is available for purchase from NFPA online at www.nfpa.org/catalog (\$34.43 member/\$38.25 non-member). Also available is the NFPA 25 Handbook (\$85.46 member/\$94.95 non-member), which combines the complete standard with supplementary text, case studies, reproducible forms and more. NFPA's investigative report on the One Meridian Plaza fire can also be obtained from NFPA online. ■

BURNING ISSUES

Support SB 2466 Fire Sprinkler Homestead Act A Tax Exemption for Homeowners Who Install Fire Sprinkler Systems

Senate Bill 2466 introduced by Senator Iris Martinez (D-Chicago) amends the Property Tax Code by creating a homestead improvement exemption for the installation and maintenance of a residential fire safety sprinkler system. It provides that homestead properties that have been improved with a fire safety sprinkler system after January 1, 2004 are entitled to a fire safety sprinkler home-

stead improvement exemption. Limited to \$2,500.00 or the actual cost of installation, whichever is less, for the year that the system is installed, and \$100.00 each year thereafter that the system remains in place, when the property is owned and used exclusively for a residential purpose.

Contact your representative and tell them you support SB 2466. ■

The BURNING ISSUES is a new feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights a special legislative issue. Contact Tom Lia to submit your special issues.

Dan Turner Joins Fire Sprinkler Board as Consultant



Dan Turner
866-264-3722
turnerd@ameritech.net

Dan Turner has joined the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) as a fire safety consultant where he will be available to municipalities for input on all phases of fire sprinkler codes from commercial to residential.

Turner, who is currently an engineer/paramedic with the Orland Fire Protection District, has been a member of the fire service since 1987. He also held positions with the Homer Township Fire Protection District where he was a deputy fire marshal/fire prevention administrator.

Turner has worked with NIFSAB in the past as a spokesperson in the 30-second TV spot that has appeared on WGN and CLTV. He also appears in print ads that ran in a number of consumer and trade magazines and newspapers in Illinois and Wisconsin.

NIFSAB was created by the Northern Illinois Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association to educate and inform fire protection professionals and the public at large of the vital role fire sprinklers play in saving lives and providing building protection. Tom Lia, formerly a fire marshal with the Orland Fire Protection District, is the executive director.

"We are happy to have a person of Dan's caliber and commitment on board," Lia said. "We worked together in the Fire Prevention Bureau at the Orland Fire District before Dan went to Homer where he upgraded and improved their fire codes. He has a complete understanding of fire sprinkler systems; their life- and property-saving benefits and the process of helping other communities upgrade their codes."

Turner will work out of the NIFSAB office in Orland Park assisting with code questions and municipal inquiries. He's responsible for working with municipalities located in the southern suburbs and Will County area. ■

Backflow Testing *continued from page 1*

essential for code compliance and routine effective sprinkler system care. Therefore, they should be on your radar screen.

According to David R. Hague, P.E., NFPA senior fire protection engineer and editor of the 2002 NFPA *Water-Based Fire Protection Systems Handbook*, testing of backflow assemblies is especially beneficial because the devices are static.

"The movement of the internal components is what is important," Hague said. "If it sits too long and debris builds up, it won't seal properly and will no longer provide backflow prevention. It doesn't take much. Even a tiny pebble could compromise the backflow prevention capabilities."

Backflow testing is useful beyond the protection of public drinking supplies, allowing you to assess proper functioning as well as identify other concerns. Untested backflow assemblies can conceal problems ranging from sediment deposit to inadequate flushing of shut off valves. Left unresolved, these can lead to a serious breach in the fire sprinkler system's integrity.

When backflow assemblies fail, they tend to fail by permitting backflow. However, that is not the only potential malfunction. According to NFPA's Hague, "There is the potential for a shut valve. Part of the test should be verification that both of the OS&Y (outside screw and yoke) valves are open."

According to the *NFPA Handbook*, control valves are the leading cause of sprinkler system failure.

NFPA 25, *Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems*, calls for both a forward flow test and a backflow performance test in Chapter 12, "Valves, Valve Components, and Trim." The tests consolidate inspection, testing and maintenance of all types of fire protection system valves.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has stepped up enforcement of cross-connection regulations to reduce the possibility of backflow incidents. Backflow prevention devices are required to be tested at the time of installation and annually thereafter. The IEPA requires facilities to submit verification of backflow prevention device testing to public water supply officials, who are charged with ensuring that appropriate inspection and maintenance is conducted on all applications for cross-connection control devices.

If you are relying solely on water purveyors to enforce IEPA compliance regulations for backflow testing for the facilities in your jurisdiction, you may be leaving the systems

vulnerable. While sound in theory, this delegation assumes the local water departments have cataloged the presence of any backflow devices under their authority. If they do not know the location of each one, the result may be "hidden" backflow prevention devices in your jurisdiction that have never been tested.

To ensure the effective care of facilities, consider making annual backflow testing part of your comprehensive inspection and testing process.

Illinois administrative law requires annual testing and maintenance record keeping by licensed plumbing companies. When you choose a professional to perform tests in your jurisdiction, the minimum qualification in Illinois is a licensed plumbing contractor with Cross-Connection Control Device Inspection and Certification (CCCDI) credentials. You should also consider a source that holds NICET III or IV credentials to assure your tester understands all of the requirements of a fire sprinkler system in addition to the IEPA requirements.

If you haven't already determined that sprinkler system backflow testing is essentially part of your job, now is the time. The only way you can be sure the devices under your care are being routinely and adequately tested is to make backflow testing part of your complete facilities inspection process.

As a resource for more information, go to www.backflow.com. ■

Wheeling Chief

continued from page 5

that most fire deaths occur in homes, our ordinances provide true life safety," he added.

Maclsaac attributes his success to perseverance. "I've been before the Village Board at least a dozen times, sharing information even putting on demonstrations," he said.

Following the Rhode Island nightclub fire last year, Maclsaac said he shared information with board members comparing the tragic fire with another nightclub fire that occurred during the same week. The difference was the other fire, which occurred in Minneapolis, had fire sprinklers; there were no deaths and minimal damage. That information reaffirms the value of Wheeling's ordinances he said.

"I'm honored to receive this award," Maclsaac said. "I knew Wayne for many years. He lived in Wheeling. He was a great guy who had a passion and special way of getting his point across."

Maclsaac is the fifth recipient of the Leucht Memorial Award, following Chief Dave Danley of Barrington Fire Protection District, Battalion Chief Dan Tholotowsky of Pleasantview Fire Protection District, Division Chief Alan Berkowsky of Evanston Fire Department and Robert Nielsen, Director, Fire Prevention Bureau, Westmont Fire Department.

Maclsaac will receive the award along with a \$2,500 donation to the charity of his choice, at The Ninth Annual Illinois Burn Prevention Invitational, at the Glen Flora Country Club in Waukegan, June 7th. ■

High-Rise Testimonials Heard on WBBM Radio

People who listened to WBBM World News Round Up at 6 p.m. every night heard testimonials from three people who shared their experiences with high-rise fires in buildings that are not protected with fire sprinkler systems.

Maureen Marley, who lives on the 14th floor of a high-rise on Chestnut Street, talked about a frightening experience trapped in her apartment after a fire started in a neighbor's apartment on the same floor.

Dennis Mushol, who lives on the 18th floor of a high-rise, shared his experience concerning two fires in his building. In the second fire, a resident from another floor died. As a board member of his building's condo association, Mushol talks about how the building's insurance increased by hundreds of thousands of dollars after the fires.

Ed Prendergast, who served as Fire Prevention Engineer with the Chicago Fire Department for thirty years, believes that



Maureen Marley (left) and Linda Strom, WBBM Senior Account Executive, in the WBBM studio after recording the high-rise messages.

one of the most dangerous calls is a high-rise fire that does not have fire sprinklers. He told listeners that it's difficult to quickly and safely evacuate buildings as well as for firefighters to reach upper floors.

All three messages ended reminding listeners that a high-rise without fire sprinklers is not a place to live or work. ■



Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board

www.firesprinklerassoc.org

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Orland Park, IL 60462

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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



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