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Hundreds of Fire and Building Officials Attend Residential Fire Sprinkler Summit

ADDISON, Ill., Feb. 4 -- More than 300 fire and building officials from 70 fire departments, 24 fire protection districts and people representing 22 various associations attended the Residential Fire Sprinkler Summit at the Medinah Shriners facility in Addison, Illinois. Keynote speakers included Jim Shannon, president of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and John Viniello, president, National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA). The event was sponsored by the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, Illinois Fire Inspectors Association and the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board.

Shannon talked about NFPA's new "Fire Sprinkler Initiative" Web site <http://www.firesprinklerinitiative.org>, a resource for the fire service and other sprinkler advocates who want to demonstrate the need for home fire sprinklers in their community. The site contains information to help navigate the legislative process to get sprinkler ordinances introduced and passed in their communities and allow them to come together to share their ideas, successes and tools with other advocates.

Shannon acknowledged the people attending the audience who represent the communities that have upgraded their fire safety codes and passed ordinances requiring residential fire sprinklers in single-family homes. Illinois has 57 communities and fire districts that have adopted home fire sprinkler ordinances, second to California. Shannon acknowledged Dave Grupp, retired Chief, Long Grove Fire Protection District for being the first to pass a home fire sprinkler ordinance in Illinois in 1988. Shannon also recognized Bob Wilcox, Chief, Park Forest Fire Department for passing ordinances in two municipalities, Matteson and Park Forest.

Viniello talked about why it's important for the fire sprinkler industry to support the fire service in their efforts to pass ordinances that result in safer communities. He talked about NFSA's history of education programs and presented various examples of how NFSA has worked with the media following major fires that result in news stories that focus on the life-saving value of fire sprinklers. Viniello said its more common for the media to point out that buildings were not protected with fire sprinklers following a significant fire. One example was a story that appeared on ABC News following the Sofa Super Store fire in Charleston, SC, where nine firefighters died. ABC interviewed Viniello who talked about how fire sprinklers could have prevented the deaths. He also talked about the important resources available to the fire service to support their efforts.

Patrick Parsley, International Code Council (ICC), talked about how the International Residential Code has changed since the hearings in September requiring fire sprinklers in all new homes including townhouses and one- and two-family dwellings, effective January 1, 2011.

A panel including fire safety and code consultants, sprinkler contractors and fire officials

answered questions from the audience. The program ended with a presentation recognizing members of the fire service and elected officials from communities who have upgraded their fire codes including the Villages of Highwood, Park Forest, Berkeley, Oak Forest and Chicago Ridge. Also recognized were the fire protection districts of Countryside, Roberts Park, Manhattan, Palatine Rural, Newport Township, Lincolnshire-Riverwoods and Barrington Countryside and fire departments from Des Plaines, Skokie, Roselle, Country Club Hills and Lake Zurich.

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