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## **Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board Commends Mayor Daley and Alderman Burke for High-Rise Safety Ordinances**

November 5, 2003—The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board commends Mayor Richard Daley and Alderman Edward Burke for introducing ordinances requiring Chicago high-rise buildings be retrofit with fire sprinkler systems.

“Fire sprinklers save lives, it’s that simple,” said Tom Lia, Executive Director, Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB). “It’s great to see both Mayor Daley and Alderman Burke take a leadership role and introduce these ordinances.”

Lia said fire sprinklers would have prevented the six deaths that occurred on October 17<sup>th</sup> at the Cook County Administration Building.

“It’s vital that the ordinance does not exclude residential high-rise buildings,” Lia said. Citing the National Fire Protection Association’s “High-Rise Building Fires” Report (September 2001), Lia said most high-rise building fires and associated losses occur in apartment buildings.

“If you look at the high-rise fires that occurred over the last few years here in Chicago, people died in residential high-rise fires,” Lia said. “According to the NFPA, those at highest risk of dying in a fire are the very young, older adults and people with disabilities,” Lia said. “That is why residential high-rise buildings also need these life-safety systems.”

According to the Chicago High-Rise Commission Report, the rate of fire deaths in Chicago’s high-rise buildings is approximately 3.5 times greater than the national average. More than 800 high-rise buildings in Chicago do not have fire sprinkler protection.

Lia said he was disappointed with Alderman Burton Natarus’s comments today at the City Council meeting. Natarus incorrectly stated that fire sprinklers increase the amount of smoke and claimed that only the fire sprinkler industry would benefit from the ordinances. “I hope Alderman Natarus is just misinformed and not intentionally misleading people,” Lia said. “

After serving 17 years with the fire service, Lia said he has yet to meet a fire chief who doesn't stand behind fire sprinklers as the only life-safety system that can save lives and protect property. "I encourage Alderman Natarus to talk to a few fire chiefs," Lia said.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), found in their *2000 America Burning Recommissioned Report*, that the most effective fire loss prevention and reduction measure, with respect to both life and property, is the installation and maintenance of fire sprinklers. Fire sprinkler systems offer the optimum level of fire safety in high-rise buildings because they control the fire immediately in the room of origin, help prevent flashover and often extinguish the fire before the fire department arrives on the scene.

Lia said it's important to retrofit all high-rise buildings, both commercial and residential, to protect occupants and firefighters. "Think about the eight Chicago firefighters who were injured while fighting the fire on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor at 260 E. Chestnut Street, January 2002. It's almost two years later and two are still on disability," Lia said. "Thanks to Mayor Daley and Alderman Burke, Chicago's firefighters will also be protected."

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