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## **FIRE SPRINKLERS COULD HAVE PREVENTED FIRE THAT DISPLACED DOZENS OF PEOPLE IN HAZEL CREST**

*April 9, 2003, Orland Park, IL*—According to the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB), fire sprinklers could have prevented a fire from spreading in a Hazel Crest apartment building causing dozens of people to be displaced.

Tom Lia, NIFSAB's Executive Director, said a fire sprinkler system would have controlled the fire until the fire department arrived on the scene.

“Fire sprinkler systems are designed to reduce heat, flames and smoke and prevent flashover. Each sprinkler is individually activated by heat, only the sprinklers closest to the fire activate,” Lia said. “In this case, fire sprinklers would have prevented the fire from spreading and damaging the 20 units.”

Lia, who was a fire marshal with the Orland Park Fire Department, said the economic impact and the disruption in life for the residents far outweigh the cost of retrofitting the building with fire sprinklers.

“Now there are dozens of residents that lived in the 24-unit apartment building that must find another place to live for at least six months,” Lia said. “Most, if not all of these residents lost belongings that they may not be able to replace, like family photos. In buildings protected with fire sprinklers, residents can often return to their homes within a couple of days,” Lia added.

In *America Burning Re commissioned*, a report prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency/United States Fire Administration (FEMA/USFA), it was stated 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.

“We encourage the Hazel Crest board to consider adopting the recommendations from FEMA and require their multi-family units be retrofit with fire sprinkler systems,” Lia said.

“Building owners can benefit from a reduction in insurance costs. Most important, residents are protected by a system that can save their lives and protect their property and belongings,” Lia said.

For more information, call NIFSAB toll-free at 866-2NIFSAB. Information is also available on the web at [www.firesprinklerassoc.org](http://www.firesprinklerassoc.org) or [www.homefiresprinkler.org](http://www.homefiresprinkler.org).

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