

Contact: Tom Lia (708) 878-8658  
or Peg Paul (815) 464-8001

## **New Bill will Allow High-Rise Building Owners To Deduct Cost to Retrofit Fire Sprinkler Systems**

November 10, 2003—Rep. Timothy L. Schmitz (49<sup>th</sup> District) introduced a Bill that could save the state's high-rise building owners the cost of retrofitting their buildings with fire sprinkler systems. Last week Schmitz introduced the Bill that would amend the Illinois Income Tax Act, providing for a deduction beginning with taxable years ending on or after December 31, 2004, of an amount equal to the actual cost to the taxpayer to retrofit a building owned by the taxpayer with a fire sprinkler system.

“We applaud Rep. Schmitz for introducing this Bill,” said Tom Lia, Executive Director, Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB). “If passed, this is just one more step in the right direction to help with the economic package to install fire sprinkler systems in residential high-rise buildings.”

According to the Chicago High-Rise Commission Report, another financial incentive is use of City of Chicago Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenues for sprinkler retrofit. Many of the high-rises in Chicago are in the downtown district. The Commission's statutory research into the state law authorizing the creation of TIF districts confirms that the City can use TIF revenues to fund sprinkler installation in renovated buildings.

Lia said financial incentives like Rep. Schmitz's Bill and Chicago's TIF's are good reasons to support Alderman Burke's ordinance requiring all high-rise buildings, both commercial and residential, to be retrofit with fire sprinkler systems.

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, for life safety, that the ordinance does not exclude residential high-rise buildings,” Lia said.

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. Residential buildings are at greatest risk: 86% of all Chicago high-rise fires were in residential structures, and approximately 85% of those buildings did not have sprinklers.

Sprinkler incentives  
Add one

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. "If Alderman Burke's ordinance is passed, Chicago's firefighters will also be protected."