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### **FIRE OFFICIAL 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 Robert Nielsen, Director, Fire Prevention Bureau, Westmont Fire Department, is the recipient of the NFSA's Wayne Leucht Memorial Award.

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 Bob for this award," said Don Smith, Chairman of the Northern Illinois Chapter of the NFSA. "He was selected because of the vital role he played in increasing the level of fire protection through the installation of fire sprinklers in existing and new commercial buildings in both Oak Brook and Westmont," Smith said. "Bob has also continually championed the benefits of fire sprinklers through his affiliation at the Illinois Fire Inspectors and Illinois Fire Chiefs Associations."

Nielsen began his career 40 years ago as a firefighter with the Air Force. After becoming a firefighter with the Oak Brook Fire Department, Nielsen moved up the ranks,

eventually becoming chief in 1987. During his career with Oak Brook, the village was one of the first Chicago suburbs to pass a minimum 1,000 sq. ft. ordinance requiring all new and existing buildings to be protected with a fire sprinkler system.

According to Nielsen, the biggest accomplishments were retrofitting the hotels, movie theaters and Oak Brook Mall.

“The anchor stores in the mall had fire sprinklers, none of the other stores did. Anyone who renewed a lease in the mall had to retrofit the space,” Nielsen said.

According to Nielsen the village board recognized the importance of fire safety to protect people and property. “The board realized their economic risk after there was a major fire in a store in Old Orchard,” he said.

Nielsen attributes the Oak Brook success to strong political support and because the code allowed combination systems. He said it was cost effective for the bigger buildings and high-rises to retrofit because they could use the standpipe system.

Nielsen retired from Oak Brook in 1997. Eight-five percent of all existing buildings were retrofit when he left. He joined the Westmont Fire Department as director of the fire prevention bureau. Working with Westmont Chief Frank Trout, they lowered Westmont’s square footage and code terminology.

“I’m honored to receive this award,” Nielsen said. “I have never found a building that couldn’t be sprinklered. I credit the various sprinkler contractors I worked with throughout the years. Many of the buildings we had to retrofit were often very challenging,” he said.

Nielsen is the fourth recipient of the Leucht Memorial Award, following Chief Danley of Barrington Fire Protection District, Battalion Chief Dan Tholotowsky of Pleasantview Fire Protection District and Division Chief Alan Berkowsky of Evanston Fire Department.

Nielsen will receive the award along with a \$1,000 donation to the charity of his choice, at The Eighth Annual Illinois Burn Camp Golf Invitational, at the Glen Flora Country Club in Waukegan, June 9<sup>th</sup>.

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