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Fire Sprinkler Group Says Daley's Ordinance is First Step Towards High-Rise Fire Safety

Orland Park, IL (December 15, 2004) – The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) congratulates Chicago Mayor Richard Daley for the first constructive step toward making the city's commercial high-rises safer.

“It's the first step because some high-rise buildings where people work will be protected,” said Tom Lia, NIFSAB executive director. “The studies and data prove that fire sprinklers protect high-rise occupants and firefighters from injury and death,” Lia said referring to the Chicago High-Rise Commission Report and the Tri-Data Study completed years before the Cook County Administration Building fire where six people died. Following the Cook County fire, the Abner Mikva Commission, enlisted by Cook County, and James Lee Witt, commissioned by the State of Illinois, both released reports. Lia also refers to FEMA's *America Burning* Report.

Lia said his only concern is that Daley's ordinance does not meet the requirements of NFPA Life-Safety 101 (2000 Edition) that has been adopted by the Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal. That code requires fire sprinklers or an equivalent life safety system be installed in all residential and commercial high-rise buildings regardless of home rule.

According to Lia, major differences in the mayor's ordinance include eliminating historical and landmark high-rise buildings. Ironically, the LaSalle Bank building is a designated landmark and would be exempt from installing a fire sprinkler system under Daley's ordinance.

Lia said when it comes to protecting residential high-rise buildings; Mayor Daley's ordinance requires a Life Safety Evaluation (LSE) for each building. “The LSE in Mayor Daley's ordinance is diluted compared to the National Model Code evaluations. Buildings that would require fire sprinkler systems under the National Model Code may not need fire sprinklers using the evaluation in Daley's ordinance,” Lia said.

“The public should not be misled to believe that a building that passes the Life Safety Evaluation in Mayor Daley's ordinance without fire sprinklers is safe,” Lia said.

“Without a doubt, Mayor Daley's ordinance is a positive first step, one that will begin to protect people who work in Chicago's high-rise buildings. After some of these buildings are retrofit, the City, in addition to building owners and managers, will see actual cost figures,” Lia said. “Then they'll see the true facts about the costs associated with retrofitting a high-rise instead of the inflated figures that have been promulgated for many years.”

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“High-Rise” Button

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