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Fire Sprinkler Group Says Cook County Report Confirms That Sprinklers Would Have Prevented Six Deaths

July 7, 2004, Orland Park, IL—According to the non-profit Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB), the final report from the Cook County panel confirms what the City of Chicago has known for years, that fire sprinklers save lives.

The panel's final report echoes the Sprinkler Advisory Board's position that retrofitting pre-1975 high-rises with automatic fire sprinkler systems would have a major impact on public safety.

“The County has invested heavily in a review of the tragic fire and the panel's conclusions are adamantly in support of stronger public safety initiatives, including the retrofitting of high-rise buildings with sprinklers,” said Tom Lia, executive director of NIFSAB. “The report makes clear: If the Cook County Building had had fire sprinkler protection, six people would be alive today.”

More than 800 high-rise buildings in the city currently stand without the century old, state-of-the-art life safety technology.

Following the County building tragedy, Mayor Richard Daley and Ald. Edward Burke (14th) introduced separate sprinkler ordinances. Daley's ordinance requires all commercial buildings be retrofit. It does not include residential buildings and designated landmarks. It gives commercial buildings until 2016 to comply.

Burke's ordinance requires sprinklers in all high-rise buildings, commercial and residential. Burke's ordinance requires fire sprinklers to be installed by 2008.

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County Report
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Lia said the County Report also confirms the findings from the 1999 Chicago High-Rise Commission Report again stating that fire sprinklers save the lives of occupants and firefighters.

The High-Rise Commission Report stated that the rate of fire deaths in Chicago's high-rise buildings is approximately 3.5 times greater than the national average. The commission recommended sprinkler retrofit over a 20-year period. A \$400,000 city study by the Tri Data Company also recognized the high-rise fire problem and recommended fire sprinkler be retrofit in a 5-10 year phase-in plan.

“Now it's up to the City Council to pass an ordinance requiring Chicago's high-rise buildings be retrofit with fire sprinklers. Let's hope that the County's report is not ignored.” Lia said.

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NIFSAB is a non-profit organization composed of fire officials, contractors, building officials, suppliers, architects, engineers, and manufacturers. NIFSAB is dedicated to educating and informing the public and elected and appointed officials of the vital role that fire sprinklers play in fire protection.

For more information visit www.firesprinklerassoc.org.