

Hickory Hills 22nd Chicago Area Town to Pass a New Commercial Zero Fire Tolerance and New Single-Family Home Fire Sprinkler Ordinance

Orland Park, January 28, 2005—In an effort to increase fire safety and protect its citizens, the Hickory Hills City Council unanimously approved an ordinance requiring the installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems in all new commercial construction and new homes.

The ordinance requires all new, single-family homes to have home fire sprinklers installed according to NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 13D. The ordinance also requires fire sprinklers in commercial buildings with major additions.

“We passed this ordinance for the public’s health, safety and welfare,” said Mayor Michael Howley.

Howley said he first learned about residential fire sprinklers when he met with Chief William Doherty, Roberts Park Fire Protection District and Chief Richard McKeon, North Palos Fire Protection District. The two fire districts protect Hickory Hills.

“Both had residential fire sprinklers at the top of their lists,” Howley said. “So I felt we should take it to the next step. But we wanted to make sure it wouldn’t stall any new development. So we asked our building commissioner to check it out,” he said.

According to Howley, they found no adverse effects from residential fire sprinkler ordinances. Instead, they heard positive responses from other mayors, elected officials and village managers.

“Everyone did their research,” Howley said. “We have a great city council that works as a team. Safety is very important to all of us. We looked at all sides of this issue. We feel we made a very good decision that will improve the life safety of our residents and our firefighters,” Howley added.

“Hickory Hills Mayor Howley and the City Council members have made a quantum leap in fire protection for the future of new buildings and residents of Hickory Hills”, said Tom Lia, Executive Director of the Northern Illinois Fire

Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB). Hickory Hills improved their ranking in fire protection codes amongst the political entities encompassed in a ten county region in the Chicago area from number 121 to number 5. “To make such an improvement in a towns fire protection code is quite an accomplishment”, said Lia. The mayor and city council based the new fire sprinkler ordinance on the guidelines set forth in FEMA’s American Burning Report and FEMA’s Firefighter Life Safety Summit recommendations.

The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, NIFSAB, provided national reports, PowerPoint programs, cost comparisons, insurance research, and other audio/visual support materials used to educate the elected officials upon their request.

Besides Mayor Howley, the aldermen involved in the passage of this ordinance were Louis E. DeRose, Tom McAvoy, Michael S. McHugh, John G. Moirano, Kathleen J. Riley, Joseph M. Stachnik II, John Szeszycki, Scott Zimmerman, and Building Commissioner Gordon Betcher, along with Roberts Park Fire Protection District’s Fire Inspector Joseph Duffy. Chief Doherty, D/C Murphy, and the trustees of the Roberts Park FPD should be commended for their strong support and leadership to this effort.

Other municipalities that require residential fire sprinklers include: Barrington, Berkeley, Clarendon Hills, Countryside Fire Protection District, Glen Ellyn, Hoffman Estates, Huntley Fire Protection District, Indian Creek, La Grange Park, Lake Barrington, Long Grove, Matteson, Mount Prospect, North Maine Fire Protection District, Park Ridge, Round Lake Beach, Skokie, Streamwood, West Dundee, Long Grove Fire Protection District and Wheeling. Several other communities are also progressing towards this goal.

For a copy of the presentation materials and ordinance used at Hickory Hills, contact NIFSAB at (708) 403-4468 or email sprinkttml@aol.com.

###