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**SC Furniture Warehouse Tragedy Didn't Have to Happen;  
NIFSAB Calls for Stepped Up Fire Sprinkler Vigilance**

June 19, 2007 --. “The nine firefighters might be alive today had a Charleston, SC furniture store and warehouse that burned June 18 been protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system,” said Tom Lia, director of the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB). The fast-spreading fire burned uncontrolled until firefighters arrived. The severely undermined structure collapsed, killing the firefighters. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the firefighter families of this tragedy

“Had they been installed, fire sprinklers would have controlled the fire, heat and smoke in the building while the fire was controllable,” Lia said, “preventing the fire from spreading.” Fire sprinkler systems activate automatically, while the fire is still small. That quick control provides additional time for occupants to safely escape and to protect firefighters who respond to the scene.

“For more than 100 years, fire sprinklers have demonstrated their unmatched ability to preserve life when fire strikes,” Lia said. “That’s why an unprecedented group of fire safety leaders specified the need for improved fire codes for increased sprinkler system installations when the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation convened a national Life Safety Summit to reduce firefighter deaths.”

The Foundation established objectives to reduce the firefighter fatality rate by 25% within five years and by 50% within 10 years. The group's 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives include one focused on fire sprinklers: "Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers."

Illinois leads the country with sixty-five municipalities having made the life safety of occupants and first responders a priority by enforcing zero-square-foot fire sprinkler ordinances, requiring fire sprinkler systems in all new commercial construction. Forty-four municipalities/districts require fire sprinkler systems in all new homes. "Those municipalities have taken important steps to prevent a tragedy like what happened in South Carolina," Lia said. "But Illinois advocates for fire safety won't rest until every municipality has this critical protection."

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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](http://www.firesprinklerassoc.org).**