

Contact: Peg Paul
(815) 464-8001

**North Maine Fire Protection District Fire Marshal Recipient of
NFSA's Wayne Luecht Memorial Award**

The Illinois Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) and the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) announced that Arnie Witzke, Fire Marshal, North Maine Fire Protection District, is the recipient of the NFSA's Wayne Luecht Memorial Award.

In memory of fallen firefighter Wayne Luecht, Fire Marshal from the Northbrook Fire Department, the award was created to recognize members of the local fire service who personify the spirit and dedication to fire prevention. 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.

According to Dave Kelly, Chairman of the Northern Illinois Chapter of the NFSA, Witzke was chosen because of his dedication and hard work. "Arnie understands how important it is to educate about the life-saving role fire sprinklers play to protect citizens and firefighters in our communities. Arnie has worked hard to educate the district trustees and policy makers resulting in a residential fire sprinkler ordinance. He also works hard to educate residents and children." Kelly said.

Witzke began his fire service career as a volunteer in Buffalo Grove in 1974. Ten years later, he became a full time inspector at the Glenview Naval Air Station. During that time, he met Wayne Luecht. Witzke accepted a job as a building inspector in Colorado after local authorities recognized his knowledge of codes while working with him to build a vacation home. He returned to Illinois in 1995 to finish his fire science degree and take care of family.

"I am humbled and honored by the recognition of this award," stated Witzke. "I have always considered Wayne Luecht as one of my mentors. I am only doing what is in the scope of my job as Fire Marshal."

Three years ago, Witzke worked with Chief Richard Dobrowski, North Maine Fire Protection District, to write and receive a FEMA Grant to retrofit the North Maine fire station with a fire sprinkler system. Witzke also worked with the North Maine Fire District Board to pass an ordinance requiring fire sprinkler systems in all new commercial and residential constructions. The zero square foot ordinance went into effect July 2004.

In addition, Witzke was instrumental in passing a code change to the NFPA Standard for fire alarms in apartments. He also worked with Cook County to allow the use of CPVC plastic pipe in sprinkler installations.

Witzke believes that educating about the life-safety benefits of fire sprinklers starts with children. He said when children learn about fire sprinklers they will grow up with an increased awareness. As young adults, they will look for sprinklers in their dorms and will want to be protected in their homes as well. Witzke continues to be an advocate for including fire sprinkler information in the NFPA Fire Prevention Week messages.

Witzke is the eighth recipient of the NFSA Luecht Memorial Award, following Fire Chief Robert Wilcox of the Park Forest Fire Department; Fire Chief of Clarendon Hills Brian Leahy; Chief MacIsaac of Wheeling; Chief Dave Danley of Barrington Fire Protection District; Battalion Chief Dan Tholotowsky of Pleasantview Fire Protection District; Division Chief Alan Berkowsky of Evanston Fire Department and Robert Nielsen, Director, Fire Prevention Bureau, Westmont Fire Department.

In addition to the award Arnie is allowed to designate \$2,500.00 to the charities of his choice. Arnie chose to donate \$1,250.00 to Camp I Am Me and \$1,250.00 to The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Witzke will be presented with his award at the NFSA Chapter Meeting on March 13th.

###

The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board is a Not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting progressive legislation, raising public awareness, educating code officials and governmental policy makers by demonstrating the proven performance of fire sprinklers in saving both lives and property.

For more information visit firesprinklerassoc.org.