Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board
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Fire Sprinkler TIMES

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY

SPRING 2010 NORTHERN ILLINOIS FIRE SPRINKLER ADVISORY BOARD www.FireSprinklerAssoc.org

Inside:

NIFSAB Updates

NFSA Illinois Notes

Successful Activations

Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive Act Makes Its Way in the Senate

Retro Section: Federal Grant Allows Skokie to Retrofit Firehouses; Mixed-Use Building Receives Sprinkler Overhaul; Chicago Landmark Achieves Sprinkler Status

Palos FPD and Crest Hill Join Illinois' 13D Communities; Burlington FPD Closely Following

Residential Fire Safety Institute Updates Award Criteria and Communications

Spotlight On: Newest Fire Sprinkler Ordinance Is Anything But Normal

Tinley Park Townhouse Rebuilt with Fire Sprinklers After Tragic Fire

La Grange Park Fire Department Participates in CBS Early Show Segment

Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition and FM Global Release Preliminary Environmental Data for Fire Sprinklers

New TEAM PHOENIX Marathon Charity Team Needs Your Support

NIFSAB Donates to Fire Inspectors at Lewis University

NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Freedom of Information Act Reveals Failure to Comply in High-Rises

Owners of 759 non-sprinklered high-rise buildings in the City of Chicago were required by law to file a Life Safety Evaluation (LSE) plan prior to January 1, 2006, as part of the Life Safety Ordinance adopted by the City Council in 2004. More than four years after the deadline, nearly 500 building owners who conducted LSEs have failed to achieve their LSE standards and 107 owners have yet to file one at all. Not one penny in authorized fines has been levied or collected.

This shocking tally came to light when Phil Rogers, a news reporter with NBC Chicago, filed a Freedom of Information Act request to determine LSE compliance and broadcast his findings in December. According to the news report: "Worse still: not a single building owner has been cited for failure to comply with the order. If fines had been levied for the buildings which have not filed their life safety reports, they would now total more than $23 million."

Outraged by the blatant disregard for public safety and the City's willingness to turn a blind eye to it, Alderman Edward M. Burke (14th Ward) recently filed a resolution to convene special hearings "at

continued on page 9

In December, a deadly fire occurred at the high-rise building at 260 East Chestnut in Chicago, needlessly repeating a deadly fire in the same building in January 2002. Now, Chicago Alderman Edward Burke is looking to make some changes within the city's high-rise fire protection mandates.

States Begin Passage of International Residential Code

Courtesy of the International Residential Code Fire Sprinkler Coalition

The final action hearing agenda for the 2012 International Residential Code (IRC) has been released by the International Code Council (ICC), and the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition reports that there were no public comments challenging code requirements for residential fire sprinklers. Accordingly, under ICC regulations, requirements for residential sprinklers will not be subject to debate at ICC's final action hearing in Dallas in May. Instead, proposals to rescind sprinkler requirements from the IRC will be automatically disapproved, without discussion, as part of a consent agenda.

ICC's membership has spoken very clearly on the issue of residential fire sprinklers, implementing requirements using a gradual and measured approach over a period of more than 20 years. ICC's legacy organizations began requiring fire sprinklers in multi-family occupancies in the 1980s. Those requirements were extended to single-family homes in 2006 via an optional IRC appendix, and in 2008, ICC members approved fire sprinklers as a standard feature to be included in all new homes. That action was upheld on appeal and was then reaffirmed last year by the ICC code development committee that oversees the IRC. In the latter vote, every member of the code development committee, other than the four who were appointed by the National Association of Home

continued on page 8

NIFSAB Updates

By Tom Lia, NIFSAB Executive Director
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Illinois Is a Leader When It Comes to Residential Fire Sprinkler Protection

Fire safety in Illinois communities has come a long way over the past decade. Over the last ten years, building directors from dozens of communities took a proactive approach in their efforts to upgrade their codes by including fire sprinklers for new single-family homes. At the time, only Long Grove and Barrington had such progressive ordinances.

Since 1999, over 60 municipalities and fire districts in Illinois have adopted residential fire sprinkler ordinances, protecting thousands of new homes. Illinois is only second to California, which has approximately 100 sprinklered residential communities. Both states have been ahead of the curve when it comes to fire protection in the United States.

Here are some interesting facts about fires in our homes:

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), deaths from fires and burns are the fifth most common cause of unintentional injuries and deaths in the United States (CDC, 2006) and the third-leading cause of fatal home injuries (Runyan, 2004).
- According to the International Association for the Study of Insurance Economics, the U.S. ranks seventh for mortality rates from fire among the 25 developed countries.
- In 2008, someone in the U.S. died in a fire every 158 minutes, and someone was injured every 31 minutes; eighty percent of those fire deaths occurred in homes. Fire departments responded to 403,000 home fires in the U.S., which claimed the lives of 2,755 people and injured another 13,560 — none of which even reflects the additional injuries and deaths in the fire service (Karter, 2009).
- Nearly 100 firefighters died across the country in the line of duty in 2009 with nine having already perished in 2010. U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) statistics show that residential structure fires represented 84 percent of all fire deaths and 81 percent of the injuries to civilians in 2008. One of the USFA's main program goals is a 25 percent reduction in firefighter fatalities in five years and a 50 percent reduction within ten years.

To put this in context, the annual losses from floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters combined in the United States average just a fraction of those from fires. The public, the media, and local governments generally are unaware of the magnitude and seriousness of the fire problem to individuals and their families, to communities, and to the nation.

Now the rest of the country has the opportunity to catch up to the trend we have experienced here in Illinois. National and international code development organizations are including residential fire sprinkler requirements into the bodies of their model codes.

The world's largest fire safety organization, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which is the title-holder for Fire Prevention Week, has voted for and written residential fire sprinkler requirements into its Life Safety Code 101 (2006 Edition) and Building Code 5000.

The International Code Council (ICC) also voted residential fire sprinklers into the body of its 2009 International Residential Code (IRC) at its Minnesota hearings and again during its hearing in Baltimore for the 2012 version of the code.

At its final action hearings, the ICC's building and fire officials were allowed to vote, leading to affirmation of the residential fire sprinkler requirement by both the overwhelming floor vote and the IRC Committee. Those participating in the process included engineers, consultants, building inspectors, fire officials, contractors and union members.

continued on page 6

NFSA Illinois Notes

By Robert Kleinheinz, NFSA Regional Manager
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New Challenges to Maintaining Fire Safety in 2010

Spring is here and with that comes the spring legislative session here in Illinois. Currently being worked on are issues that are of great importance to municipalities and fire protection districts with established 13D residential fire sprinkler ordinances, as well those that are considering adopting such ordinances in the future.

The most important issue that will be worked on in the coming year is the regulation of private water agencies. Fire sprinkler advocates must work together in order to help these groups understand the risks and implications of applying unfair water charges or standby water charges to homes with fire sprinkler systems. The issue is that both commercial and residential systems will be charged for water that they are not using, even though an occupancy with fire sprinklers would require much less water to extinguish a fire than one without fire sprinklers.

Other important issues that will require the support of fire sprinkler advocates are legislative issues regarding fire sprinkler protection in collegiate Greek housing units in Illinois and the bill to ban novelty cigarette lighters, which was introduced by the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association (IFIA). Mike Schmitt, fire marshal of the Long Grove Fire Protection District and former president of the IFIA, explains that the problem with novelty lighters is that they look like a toy, so children are more likely to pick them up and play with them.

Please keep an eye open for these important issues and contact your local representatives, asking them for their support of these causes.

Also, please remember to begin preparing side-by-side demonstrations as the weather begins to warm up. If you would like to conduct one of these demonstrations for your municipality or fire district, please contact me by e-mail at Kleinheinz@nfsa.org or by phone at (914) 671-1075. ■

SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS is a regular feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights submitted saves. See details at bottom of this page.

Fire Sprinklers at Work

SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS

NOVEMBER 2009

Apple Chevrolet

Tinley Park Fire Department

Three sprinklers activated and extinguished a fire in an equipment storage room. The fire department ventilated the building. Damage was estimated at $20,000.

Daniel Riordan, Senior Fire Inspector, Tinley Park Fire Department

Industrial Steel Construction Inc.

Pleasantview Fire Protection District

One sprinkler helped control a fire that began when a steel shot abrasive blaster with a dust collector ignited. An estimated $50,000+ was saved.

"The sprinkler system was returned to service within two hours, allowing the facility to reopen with no injuries or damages to the structure or equipment," stated Fire Inspector Joe Lyons. "This is the fire district's 56th sprinkler save since 1985."

Joe Lyons, Fire Inspector, Pleasantview Fire Protection District

DECEMBER 2009

Mecca Foods

Bridgeview Fire Department

Fire crews arrived to find one sprinkler had extinguished a couch fire.

"This was a textbook save by the sprinkler system — everything went right. We got the alarm, responded, and found that the fire had already been put out by the system. Never once were the firefighters' lives put in harm's way, and the building was kept from being destroyed. All the adjacent units were able to open the next day for business," said Mark Kraft.

Mark Kraft, Fire Safety Officer, Bridgeview Fire Department

Condo Building

Roberts Park Fire Protection District

An arson fire was extinguished by a single sprinkler in a nine-unit condo building in Hickory Hills, which had been retrofitted with a fire sprinkler system. Damage was limited to the area of origin.

DECEMBER 2009 *continued*

"The fire sprinkler system did an outstanding job. The residents were able to move back into their homes after the incident. It must have been a great present for all the residents to be able to still spend Christmas in their own homes. Thank you to to the Hickory Hills mayor and aldermen for enacting ordinances that save lives and property."

Donald Huenecke, Fire Inspector, Roberts Park Fire Protection District

Sephora

Chicago Fire Department

According to Deputy Fire Chief James Thompson, a fire starting in the cosmetic store due to an electric malfunction in a cosmetic case was held in check by the store's sprinkler system. In less than an hour, the fire was extinguished. Even though a few neighboring stores in the indoor mall were open during the fire, there was no evacuation necessary.

WBBM News Radio 780

Village in the Park Apartments

Schaumburg Fire Department

A stovetop fire was extinguished by one sprinkler on the seventh floor of a high-rise building. The stove hood and cabinets over the stove were scorched.

"There was only minimal smoke and fire damage in the apartment of origin and no damage to any other units in the building," stated Battalion Chief Kenneth Wood. "There were no injuries to the building occupants or firefighting personnel. Were it not for the automatic sprinkler system, the outcome would have been significantly different."

Wood added that the high-rise's sprinkler system was installed as a result of Schaumburg's high-rise retrofit ordinance of 2004 that was proposed by Fire Chief David Schumann.

Terrence Simale, Fire Marshal, Schaumburg Fire Department

JANUARY 2010

Circuit Board Factory

West Chicago Fire Protection District

A weekend fire at the factory of a circuit board manufacturer was extinguished by the building's fire sprinkler system.

Tom Hartel, President, Valley Fire Protection

Townhouse Complex

Homer Township Fire Protection District

Improperly discarded rags covered in wood stain caused a fire that was held in check by a single sprinkler in the two-unit townhouse complex. Firefighters were able to quickly put out the blaze and damage was limited to $5,000.

"Without the sprinkler system, the entire building may have been destroyed," said Deputy Fire Chief William Bonnar.

William Bonnar, Deputy Fire Chief, Homer Township Fire Protection District

Underwriters Laboratories

Northbrook Fire Department

Northbrook fire officials believe a fire began at Underwriters Laboratories Inc. when mattresses that had been tested in a burn room reignited.

"There was no property damage to the facility, which is specifically designed with materials that are meant to withstand multiple fires," noted District Chief Patrick Crown. "If you had to have a fire, this is where you'd want it."

Patrick Crown, District Chief, Northbrook Fire Department

FEBRUARY 2010

Eazypower Corporation

Chicago Fire Department

Sprinklers helped control a two-alarm fire in a large factory building, which is used to manufacture tool accessories. The building was unoccupied at the time of the fire and there were no injuries reported.

Will Knight, Fire Media Affairs Commander, Chicago Fire Department

continued on page 4

Save-A-Day

Visit www.FireSprinklerAssoc.org and download a copy of the "Save-A-Day" successful activation form to use when you have a successful activation in a fire sprinkler protected building.

Burning Issues

BURNING ISSUES is a feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights a special legislative issue. Contact Tom Lia to submit your special issues.

Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive Act Makes Its Way in the Senate

After having been passed in the United States House of Representatives and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on February 25, 2009, the Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive Act has sat still for some time – that is, until now.

On January 22, Senators Tom Carper (D-Delaware) and Susan Collins (R-Maine), both co-chairs of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, introduced the Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive Act in the Senate, a companion bill to the House's. The bill has now been referred to the Senate Finance Committee for consideration.

This bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to classify automatic fire sprinkler systems as five-year property for purposes of depreciation. Presently, a fire sprinkler retrofit in a commercial building is depreciated over 39 years and a residential building over 27.5 years, providing no economic incentive for fire sprinkler retrofits in the high inventory of critical occupancies across the United States.

If the legislation makes it to President Obama's desk and is signed, it will be applicable to property placed in service after April 11, 2003.

Groups supporting the passage of the Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive Act include various organizations in state and national fire services; home and fire safety associations; contractor associations; health care and insurance associations; and architect associations, among others.

"Senator Carper and Senator Collins are to be commended for introducing the Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive Act in the Senate," said Bill Webb, executive director for the Congressional Fire Services Institute. "Passage of this legislation can have a significant impact in reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by fire. ■

Successful Activations *continued from page 3*

FEBRUARY 2010 *continued*

Apartment Building
Rockford Fire Department

A grease fire in the kitchen of a twelve-unit apartment building was extinguished by the building's fire sprinkler system.

Rockford Register Star

Apartment Building
Rockford Fire Department

Damage was contained to a car in an attached garage of a ten-unit apartment building after a sprinkler activated and kept the fire from spreading.

"This incidence proves the value of residential fire sprinklers in limiting fire loss and preventing injuries or death," stated reporter Corina Curry.

Rockford Register Star

Residence Inn Marriott
Oak Brook Fire Department

A small fire in a fourth floor guest room was extinguished by the room's fire sprinkler. Damage was limited to the room of origin and the rooms on the floor directly below the fire.

Daily Herald

Metal Fabrication Building
Elk Grove Village Fire Department

A single sprinkler controlled a fire caused by hot metal particles entering a dust collector unit. Damage was estimated at less than $1,000.

Wilkie C. Escondo, Inspectional Services Supervisor, Elk Grove Village Fire Department

MARCH 2010

Hampton Inn
Skokie Fire Department

One fire sprinkler extinguished a fire that began in a guest room due to overheated cooking oil that was left unattended. The fire was contained to the room and the guest was able to escape unharmed. Damage was estimated at only $5,000.

Daniel Smith, Captain – Fire Prevention Bureau, Skokie Fire Department

Fire Station
Rockford Fire Department

The fire sprinkler system at Rockford Fire Department's Station 7 helped put out the flames of one of its own fire trucks and kept the fire from spreading to the structure. Investigators believe that the flames were sparked by an electrical problem.

WREX-TV 13

A malfunctioning clothes dryer was thought to be the source of the fire's ignition at the Towers of Edgewater.

Towers of Edgewater
Tinley Park Fire Department

A single sprinkler in one of the building's units controlled a fire that was believed to be caused by lint buildup or a malfunction of a clothes dryer in the utility closet. No injuries were reported.

Daniel Riordan, Senior Fire Inspector, Tinley Park Fire Department

Northmoor Country Club
Highland Park Fire Department

A trash fire in one of the second story units of the country club's dormitory residence was contained by a single sprinkler until fire crews arrived, keeping the fire from spreading to other units.

Highland Park Fire Department

SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATION: DECEMBER 2009

Single-Family Home
Park Ridge Fire Department

At approximately the same time as The Early Show live burn demonstration segment in La Grange Park (please see page 8 for story), no more than 20 miles away in Park Ridge, a fire sprinkler success story was coincidentally in progress.

The Park Ridge Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire at a single-family home in town, finding that the fire had begun in a basement storage bin where electronic equipment was stored. It took only one sprinkler to knock down the majority of the flames until fire crews arrived. Damage was minimal and no injuries were reported.

Fire Marshal Kevin Plach noted that this was the first successful activation of a residential fire sprinkler system in a single-family residence in Park Ridge. Since 2000, sprinklers have been a requirement in all new construction in Park Ridge and there are now approximately 500 to 600 single-family residences protected.

Deputy Fire Chief Jeff Sorensen adds, "The family was very fortunate that they were able to stay in their home for the holidays and their losses were kept to a minimum due to the fire sprinkler system and quick actions by the fire department. Even with aggressive firefighting, the basement could have easily been lost if there were no sprinklers present."

Kevin Plach, Fire Marshal, Jeff Sorensen, Deputy Fire Chief, Park Ridge Fire Department

RETRO SECTION is a feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights a special retrofit project. Contact Tom Lia to submit a special project.

RETRO SECTION

Federal Grant Allows Skokie to Retrofit Firehouses

Deputy Chief James Walters and the Skokie Fire Department are ecstatic about upcoming changes to the village's two oldest firehouses. Having received an Assistance to Firefighters Grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Department of Homeland Security, the firehouses are now being outfitted with fire sprinklers to protect the firefighters and personnel that are there daily.

"Our third station that was built in 2003 was already fully protected with fire sprinklers, but we wanted to find a way to sprinkler our other two stations that were built in 1958 and 1967, before there were any fire sprinkler requirements," said Walters. "We have been actively attempting to retrofit the other two since I joined the Fire Prevention Bureau in 2001, presenting budgets each year and requesting local funding for the projects."

Walters says that after several failed attempts locally, the department began looking into the federal grant funding, which the fire department had been applying for to fund other programs over the last seven years. The funding that came to fruition for the department's retrofit project began with the grant application in April 2008.

"Once we were notified that we received grant funding in March 2009, we began developing requests for proposals to design the suppression system in September," stated Walters. The grant is an 80/20 split with FEMA providing 80% and the Village providing the other 20%. Walters adds that it took several months, but Automatic Fire Systems from Rockford, Illinois, began the installation in January 2010 and Station 16 is already near completion.

Although the bid process and finalizing the system design took a little longer than expected, the actual installation moved along smoothly without any substantial delays or issues. Shift personnel were alerted ahead of time when work crews would be present and the installers were very good at coordinating the project, making sure to clean up after completing an area.

With fire sprinkler retrofit projects at two of Skokie Fire Department's firehouses, now all three of the department's facilities will be protected with fire sprinklers.

"I was amazed at the lack of interruption throughout the project, especially when the crews were in the Fire Administration area," notes Walters.

A product called Deco-Shield, which looks like a crown molding and covers the fire sprinkler piping, was used on the first floor, which eliminated any demolition work in the existing ceiling.

"Installing the fire sprinkler systems provides the protection our firefighters deserve, and it provides an improved level of protection for the community by not allowing us to lose response capabilities if a fire were to occur at either firehouse," Walters points out. "This shows our commitment to fire safety in our own buildings. We can use our experience with installing fire sprinklers as an example for building owners and contractors who are required to retrofit buildings in the village.

Currently, Skokie's sprinkler ordinances require all new residential occupancies, including single-family homes, to be sprinklered. Any additions of 50% or larger in existing homes require sprinklers, and any apartment-to-condo conversions require sprinklers in common areas. For commercial buildings, anything over 5,000 square feet will be sprinklered.

Walters encourages other fire departments to apply for the grants as well, stating that grant writing workshops are a good start. "You gain invaluable insight into how to write and compile a successful grant and now we will be able to proudly display our two fully sprinklered firehouses." ■

"I was amazed at the lack of interruption throughout the project," states Skokie Deputy Fire Chief James Walters.

Fire trucks, ambulances and other vehicles in the apparatus bays at the Skokie Fire Department firehouses are being protected by the newly retrofitted network of fire sprinklers.

Mixed-Use Building Receives Sprinkler Overhaul

Courtesy of Ahern Fire Protection

See story on page 11.

Chicago Landmark Achieves Sprinkler Status

Courtesy of Valley Fire Protection Systems

See story on page 11.

Palos FPD and Crest Hill Join Illinois' 13D Communities; Burlington FPD Closely Following

Two more governing bodies in Illinois have joined the ranks of municipalities and fire protection districts with NFPA 13D fire sprinkler ordinances for single-family homes: Palos Fire Protection District and the City of Crest Hill.

Palos Fire Protection District, which covers the entire Village of Palos Park and portions of Palos Heights, Orland Park and unincorporated Palos Township, passed its ordinance in June 2009. The fire protection district upgraded its previous NFPA 1 and NFPA 101 codes to the 2006 versions with some amendments, requiring fire sprinklers in all new single-family homes over 5,000 square feet.

According to Fire Chief Steven Carr, the Palos Fire Protection District is now in the process of educating government officials and the public in the surrounding municipalities in an effort to progress those municipalities' fire codes and protect more new single-family homes within the area.

The City of Crest Hill also passed its own 13D residential fire sprinkler ordinance in November 2009 by upgrading to the 2009 International Fire Code (IFC) with all appendices. One of those appendices happens to be the 2009 International Residential Code (IRC), which will require all new single-family homes built on or after January 1, 2011, to be protected with fire sprinklers. Crest Hill marked the 62nd municipality to pass a 13D ordinance.

One jurisdiction looking to follow suit with the adoption of residential fire sprinklers in its own codes is the Burlington Fire Protection District. Much like Crest Hill, the fire protection district is set to pass the 2009 IFC at its April board meeting. It, too, will include the appendix for the 2009 IRC, which requires residential fire sprinklers.

"Here in Illinois, we have managed to stay on the forefront of fire protection in homes, and we congratulate the fire service and building officials with the foresight to pass progressive legislation," said Tom Lia, executive director for the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board. ■

Residential Fire Safety Institute Updates Award Criteria and Communications

New Criteria for Life Safety Achievement Award

Since 1994, the Residential Fire Safety Institute (RFSI) has been recognizing fire departments for outstanding fire safety statistics and their fire prevention efforts through the Life Safety Achievement Award. The award was granted to any fire department that achieved zero fire deaths in the previous calendar year.

Although zero fire deaths is a worthy goal and one that will continue, RFSI does not believe it is the only qualification that would reflect excellence in fire prevention programs. For that reason, RFSI, along with partners Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company and the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) Fire Research & Education Foundation, has updated the criteria for the award to include other factors that make communities and citizens safer.

Fire departments must now meet these new criteria for the award: zero fire deaths or at least a 10% reduction in fire deaths from the previous year; an active fire prevention program; commitment to fire prevention activities; and evidence by some measure that the increased fire prevention efforts are making a positive difference.

Recipients of the award receive a certificate signed by the president and executive director of the NASFM Fire Research & Education Foundation and the president of Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company.

The Life Safety Achievement Award campaign for 2009 began in January 2009. All submitted applications must be received no later than July 31, 2010. Award notification will be made in September. For more information regarding applications for the award, please visit www.firesafehome.org.

Operation Life Safety Newsletter Goes Electronic

RFSI has been presenting current news on issues involving fire safety in the form of a hard copy, quarterly report called the Operation Life Safety Newsletter since 1982.

Now, the newsletter is taking on a whole new form as RFSI announces the new e-newsletter version, Operation Life Safety Newsflash. The e-newsletter will be e-mailed on a monthly basis and more frequently with breaking news, which means that subscribers can get their news much quicker than ever before. The e-newsletter will also feature action alerts and updates on current events related to residential fire sprinklers, carbon monoxide detection, smoke alarms, home fire safety education and other life safety information.

Those looking to subscribe to the Operation Life Safety Newsflash e-newsletter can do so by e-mailing olsnews@firesafehome.org. ■

Illinois Is a Leader *continued from page 2*

The best resource to learn about firsthand experience with residential fire sprinklers is from the local fire chief of a community that has adopted a residential ordinance. Hear from the front lines what it's like for firefighters to respond to a sprinkled home where the loss of life and property is minimized by residential fire sprinklers. Follow the visit to the firehouse by calling on one of the 60+ residential sprinklered communities. There, too, you will hear the firsthand accounts of how better protected homes are in these towns.

As we look back at the amazing progress we've made over the last decade, we look forward to bringing our lifesaving message to more communities and to more elected officials. As it did a decade ago, Illinois will continue to play a leadership role in the use of residential sprinklers. We will not rest until every community in the state advocates fire sprinklers as we work together to protect the lives and property of residents and the firefighters who protect the people of this great state. ■

Additional Resources for More Information:

- FEMA America Burning
- FEMA Fire Fighter Life Safety Summit
- USFA Recommendation
- UL Recommendation
- ISO Insurance and Water Flow
- NFPA Fire Sprinkler Initiatives

The FEMA- and government-sponsored studies below provide further information:

- Scottsdale Report
- Vancouver Report
- Prince George's County Report
- NFPA Water Integration Study
- NFPA Cost and Economic Study

SPOTLIGHT ON is a feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights a special topic or project. Contact Tom Lia to submit a topic or project.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Newest Fire Sprinkler Ordinance Is Anything But Normal

In an unprecedented event, the Town of Normal adopted the International Code Council's (ICC) 2009 International Residential Code (IRC) in January, 2010, making it the 63rd municipality in Illinois to require fire sprinkler systems in single-family homes.

But what makes the adoption so unique is not only the fact that Normal is the first Illinois municipality to adopt the 2009 IRC other than the City of Long Grove, which already had fire sprinklers in its code before the newer version, but also because Normal is the first downstate municipality to pass an NFPA 13D residential fire sprinkler ordinance. Prior to this event, the southernmost municipality or fire protection district in Illinois to have a 13D residential fire sprinkler ordinance in place was Park Forest, which is merely 20-25 miles south of Chicago. Normal's passage of the 2009 IRC marks the first major success outside of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs.

With some amendments to the IRC, the Town of Normal is able to give all parties involved more time to prepare for the transition, pushing back the official enforcement of the code from January 1, 2011, to January 1, 2012. Fire Chief Mick Humer does not view the later enforcement date as a disadvantage, but rather as a compromise that will create a more positive experience for everyone.

The Town of Normal is the first municipality outside of the Chicago suburbs to enact a residential fire sprinkler ordinance with its adoption of the 2009 IRC.

"There is no question among town officials, builders and realtors that fire sprinklers make a home safer. But it's definitely going to be a big leap as far as educating not only fire service officials, but everyone else involved as well," says Chief Humer.

Chief Humer and town officials want to make sure that the process is done correctly and without a hitch. With the passage of the ordinance already occurring and some hard work during the course of this year, the Town of Normal sees it as a leap worth making and looks forward to a more fire-safe future. ■

Tinley Park Townhouse Rebuilt with Fire Sprinklers After Tragic Fire

In August 2009, a tragic fire swept through a single unit of a Tinley Park townhome. The cause of the fire, which occurred at approximately 5:30 in the morning, was undetermined, and although it did not breach the second floor ceiling or spread to other units, it trapped a mother of three children and ultimately led to her death.

The two-story building, which contained five single-family units, was built in the late 1960s and was not required to have a fire sprinkler system installed at the time it was built. According to Fire Chief Kenneth Dunn, the fire would have certainly been kept in check if fire sprinklers had been present. He also noted that the property owner would have been alerted to the fire with the activation of the fire sprinkler system, allowing her the necessary time to escape.

"As with fires in most unprotected buildings, a fire sprinkler system could have saved a life here and kept the damage to a minimum," says Dunn. "This woman's three young children would not be without a mother today. It could have been a much better result and only necessitated a simple water cleanup."

Now the townhouse, which is being rebuilt with the insurance money, will follow the Village of Tinley Park's most modern fire safety codes, which require the installation of fire sprinklers in all new commercial and multifamily residential buildings over 3,000 square feet.

Fire sprinklers will now protect a townhouse in Tinley Park as part of a rebuild of the building after a tragic fire.

With fire sprinklers installed in the newly rebuilt townhouse, such an event does not have to ever happen again. "Fire sprinklers help to contain the fire, notify the occupant and provide a safe environment for evacuation, as well as provide a safe working environment for firefighters," states Dunn.

"Events like this support the reasons for which municipalities and fire protection districts require fire sprinklers in their codes," says Tom Lia, executive director for the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board. "Fire sprinklers support the cause and they are one more way that fire officials can proactively fight fires before they even occur." ■

States Begin Passage of IRC

continued from page 1

Builders, voted in favor of residential sprinklers, and that vote was then ratified by a vote of ICC members in attendance at the hearing.

"The true beneficiary of this great news is the American public," said Chief Ronny J. Coleman, president of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition and former fire marshal for the State of California. "Model code requirements establishing fire sprinklers as a standard feature in new homes are clearly here to stay, and that accomplishment, earned through the courage and commitment of our nation's building and fire-safety professionals, will save lives, prevent injuries and reduce property damage associated with residential fires."

The 2009 IRC, including the fire sprinkler requirement, has been adopted in California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, South Carolina and New Hampshire, and the code has cleared administrative adoption hurdles in New Jersey. However, home builder associations (HBAs) in these and other states, with the exception of California where the building industry association supported residential sprinklers, have pulled out all stops in an effort to block adoption of the IRC sprinkler provisions.

"HBAs across the country are literally throwing temper tantrums," said Jeffrey Shapiro, Executive Director of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition when asked to describe what's happening with IRC adoptions in many states. "HBAs have largely controlled building codes affecting new home construction for decades, and they clearly don't like the idea of public safety officials stepping in and exerting authority over their industry. Nevertheless, we are pleased to see public safety trumping politics in a growing number of states."

One issue that may ultimately shift the perspective of builders toward residential fire sprinklers is legal liability. Regardless of whether a state or locality chooses to amend fire sprinkler requirements out of the IRC, courts may well hold that it is incumbent upon builders to follow established standards of care for fire safety when they construct a new home. With every national code (including the 2012 IRC) now requiring every new residential property to be equipped with fire sprinklers, that standard of care is clearly established and is now well known to the industry, especially given the high profile of HBA opposition to sprinklers. Accordingly, whenever a fire involving a post-2010 home is litigated, perhaps by a grieving family or by an insurance company seeking to recoup a payout for fire damage, a decision by a builder to not include fire sprinklers in a new home will be easily characterized as a deliberate indifference toward life and property that resulted in a defective home. ■

La Grange Park Fire Department Participates in CBS Early Show Segment

Fire Chief Dean Maggos (right) and the La Grange Park Fire Department were involved with a CBS Early Show segment about fire sprinklers, which featured home improvement contributor Danny Lipford (left).

On a cool winter morning this past December, the La Grange Park Fire Department was warmed up and ready to respond to a call of a different sort. That day, the fire department was participating in a live fire sprinkler education segment with the CBS Early Show, sharing with the nation what their village has been practicing for more than seven years: residential fire sprinkler education.

Leading up to the filming of the live demonstration on how fire sprinklers work in a home, the CBS Early Show producers and the show's home improvement contributor Danny Lipford worked with the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition to look for a fire department that would assist with a shooting location and provide its fire services.

The Chicago area was a natural fit, having more than 60 municipalities with ordinances requiring residential fire sprinklers. NIFSAB Executive Director Tom Lia also was able to chip in and provide information regarding fire departments that were qualified for the job, coming to a conclusion with the La Grange Park Fire Department. "I've known and worked with the La Grange Fire Department for a number of years on residential fire sprinkler education," said Lia. "I knew they would be an excellent group of fire professionals to take part in this program."

Needing a home to perform the live fire sprinkler demonstration, the La Grange Fire Department was able to find a vacant home in town that was available for training. "It worked out perfectly since we had a home available to use for the fire sprinkler education segment," said Fire Chief Dean Maggos. "Our department enjoyed having the opportunity to participate."

In the early hours on December 23, 2009, the CBS Early Show's home improvement contributor Danny Lipford narrated the segment while a fire was set. Less than a minute later, cameras showed the fire being extinguished by the residential fire sprinkler system in the vacant home.

Fire Chief Maggos explained to Lipford how easily a fire can start if a lit candle were to accidentally be bumped into a trashcan full of paper. With the fire spreading and the fire sprinkler activating, Maggos and Lipford continued the segment, walking the audience through the steps of safely escaping the house thanks to the extra time provided by the fire sprinkler system.

Having experience from a number of smaller fire sprinkler demonstrations performed throughout the years, Fire Chief Maggos and other members of the department were standing by. "Despite some of the nervousness that comes with being televised, everyone was at ease," said Maggos. "The fire department felt very comfortable given the situation because all of the people involved were easy to work with and kept it running smoothly."

With help from La Grange Park firefighters, CBS video crews and other volunteers, the live video shoot for the CBS Early Show was a big success.

Representing the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition, Peg Paul commented on the excellent job performed by the La Grange Fire Department in preparing for the demonstration. "The fire department furnished the home with typical household items and even got it ready for the holidays, which included a decorated Christmas

continued on page 10

Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition and FM Global Release Preliminary Environmental Data for Fire Sprinklers

On the first day of the International Builders' Show on January 19, the nonprofit Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC) and FM Global, one of the world's largest business property insurers, held a press conference at the HFSC booth to announce the preliminary data of a report that will detail the environmental benefits of fire sprinklers.

FM Global's Dr. Christopher J. Wieczorek presents the "Environmental Impact of Fire Sprinklers" report at the 2010 International Builders' Show.

The study, which was conducted at FM Global's test facilities in West Glocester, Rhode Island, involved a fire demonstration in two identical rooms — one sprinklered and the other not unsprinklered. Data was collected through an overhead exhaust hood as well as through water drains and other sensors. As was suspected, preliminary findings from that demonstration have already determined that there were significant reductions in pollution, water usage and fire damage in the case of a fire.

> "greenhouse gases were reduced by 99% in the sprinklered room versus the unsprinklered. Fire damage in the sprinklered room was less than 3%, as compared with 100% destruction in the unsprinklered room, and water usage was reduced by 50% in the sprinklered room"

According to Dr. Christopher J. Wieczorek of FM Global, "There is now unprecedented scientific research to prove that fire sprinklers are proven to protect the environment."

Numerous individuals from the media at the 2010 International Builders' Show attended the press event at the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition's booth.

To simulate fire service response, fire hoses were not used until ten minutes after the fires were started in the sprinklered and unsprinklered rooms. In that time period, initial data has shown that greenhouse gases were reduced by 99% in the sprinklered room versus the unsprinklered. Fire damage in the sprinklered room was less than 3%, as compared with 100% destruction in the unsprinklered room, and water usage was reduced by 50% in the sprinklered room.

According to Dr. Christopher J. Wieczorek of FM Global, "There is now unprecedented scientific research to prove that fire sprinklers are proven to protect the environment."

A full report will be released at approximately the end of the first quarter. The full report will give much greater detail into the preliminary data, such as the types and amounts of each pollutant present in the fire sprinkler demonstration, as well as room temperatures. ■

Failure to Comply in High-Rises

continued from page 1

which the Commissioner of the Department of Buildings and the Commissioner of the Chicago Fire Department appear to explain the lack of full compliance with the current municipal law." Further, the hearings will address the validity of the assessment process for Chicago's LSEs.

Chicago Alderman Edward M. Burke (14th Ward)

Alderman Burke's resolution points out a rash of recent high-rise fires in the city. While non-sprinklered building fires have caused death and injury, fires in similar but sprinklered buildings were extinguished without incident. "Three-quarters of the City's high-rise buildings have failed to ensure the safety of people living in non-sprinklered buildings," according to the resolution.

"Fortunately, the people of Chicago have two advocates on their side," Lia says. "Alderman Burke and Phil Rogers are to be commended for their efforts to bring this public safety problem to light." ■

Alderman Burke's resolution points out a rash of recent high-rise fires in the city, most notably the one occurring at 260 East Chestnut in December 2009.

Questions on basic building code?

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New TEAM PHOENIX Marathon Charity Team Needs Your Support

TEAM PHOENIX is a new Chicago Marathon Charity Team formed to raise awareness and donations for the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. TEAM PHOENIX is the first Charity Running Team participating in the Chicago Marathon that represents burn survivors and their families, burn care health professionals, members of the fire service and fire sprinkler industry.

The Phoenix Society is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering anyone affected by a burn injury through peer support, education and advocacy.

According to TEAM PHOENIX organizers, the Chicago Marathon is perfect because it is held during National Fire Prevention Week, a time at which we all focus on preventing fires and burns. Parts of the marathon course weave through the location of the Great Chicago Fire, a historic event that changed the history of codes and building standards.

Phoenix Society for burn survivors

With a goal of raising $25,000, TEAM PHOENIX needs your help. Please visit the team's Web site at www.active.com/donate/teamphoenixchicago to show your support and donate to the cause.

Notable local runners for the team include sprinkler contractor Rodney Turner from Alliance Fire Protection, Mundelein firefighter Jason Brizzell and Stephanie Lia, daughter of Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board Executive Director Tom Lia. ■

La Grange Park

continued from page 8

tree with abounding wrapped presents. It was a perfect setting, given that the Christmas holiday was only days away," said Peg Paul.

Prior to the filming of the live segment, a similar arrangement was made with a fire department in Tennessee, only in a vacant home that was not equipped with a fire sprinkler system. That segment, which aired as B-roll footage during the live segment to show as a comparison, showed how quickly a fire spreads without a fire sprinkler system in place, thus causing a more destructive and life-threatening situation.

After the segment aired, Fire Chief Maggos received a number of e-mails from local officials as well as fire professionals throughout the country providing positive feedback. ■

NIFSAB Donates to Fire Inspectors at Lewis University

Tom Lia (left), Executive Director of the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) and National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) Director of Training Bob Trieber, present a donation of $1,350 to the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association (IFIA). Accepting the award is IFIA President Jim French (center).

Ninety-five officials from 45 fire departments and 10 building departments attended NIFSAB's two-day fire sprinkler plan review class.

RETRO SECTION is a feature of the Fire Sprinkler Times that highlights a special retrofit project. Contact Tom Lia to submit a special project.

Retro Section *(continued from page 5)*

Mixed-Use Building Receives Sprinkler Overhaul

Courtesy of Ahern Fire Protection

Just because a building is occupied, does not mean that a fire sprinkler retrofit has to be a difficult and disruptive process for those people inside the building. Just ask those working in the building at 205 West Randolph, a 23-story, mixed-use building on the corner of Randolph and Wells in Chicago's Loop.

Originally built in 1914, with an addition added in 1926, the building is home to medical offices, law offices and a school, among others. When the owners of the building decided to retrofit portions of the building with fire sprinklers, they needed to make sure that the project wouldn't disrupt the tenants' businesses. Ahern Fire Protection, the fire sprinkler company on the job, made sure to do extensive planning to ensure that the project was properly executed and went without a hitch — while keeping all parties happy.

No small task, the project consisted of a fire sprinkler retrofit of the second through eighth floors; approximately 77,000 square feet. Over 700 sprinklers were installed.

According to one of building owners, "The work was completed within budget, on time and without any complaints. Like a surgical team, they were able to install a new sprinkler system, get in and get out — all without any issues." ■

Fire sprinklers now protect medical offices, law offices and a school in the the 23-story building at 205 West Randolph in Chicago.

Chicago Landmark Achieves Sprinkler Status

Courtesy of Valley Fire Protection Systems

History is preserved at the Chicago Fine Arts Building now that it has been retrofitted with fire sprinklers.

Built in 1885 as the Studebaker Building, the presently named Chicago Fine Arts Building was recently retrofitted with a fire sprinkler system to protect the Chicago landmark and the people that work in it and visit it daily.

Earning its status as a Chicago landmark more than 30 years ago, the historical building holds artists' lofts, art galleries, interior design firms, musical instrument makers, and theater, dance and recording studios — all of which are protected by a newly retrofitted fire sprinkler system. The building even boasts one of the few manual elevators still operating in the city — run by a live elevator operator. The Artists Restaurant on the ground level is also protected.

Due to the nature of working on projects in historical buildings, project manager Brian Johnstone, foreman Rich Augustyn and the crew from Valley Fire Protection Systems knew that they had their work cut out for them and that there would surely be some challenges presented to them. However, things ran smoothly and according to plan on the one-year-long project. Even with the project being tackled during the building's normal business hours, the group was able to bring disruptions to a minimum for the artists, musicians and design professionals who work in the building, pleasing both the building management and the tenants.

According to Irene Makris, owner and general manager of Artists Restaurant, the project was done in a professional manner that was unobtrusive and not disturbing to customers.

With fire sprinklers present in the Chicago Fine Arts Building, there is now one more way that history is being preserved within the building's walls. ■

Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board

FireSprinklerAssoc.org

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For more information about fire sprinklers, contact the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, 866-2NIFSAB (866-264-3722) or send an e-mail to sprinktoml@aol.com.

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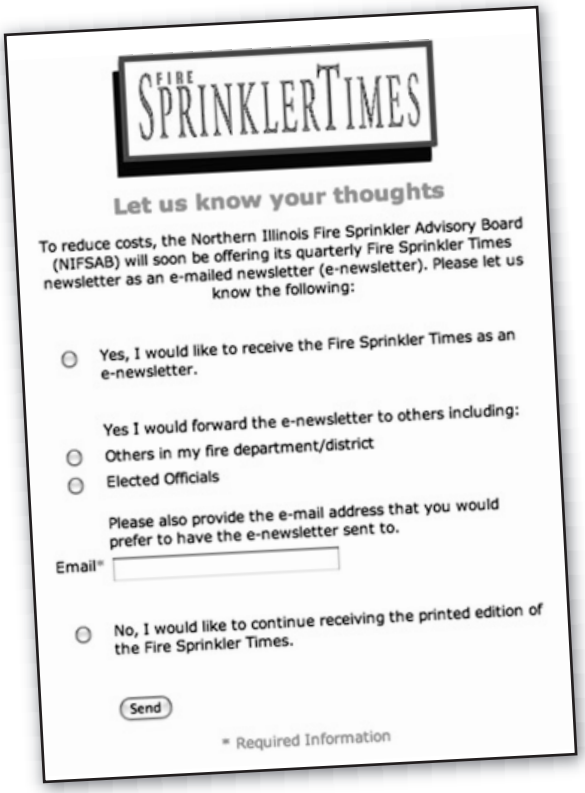

FIRE SPRINKLER TIMES

Let us know your thoughts

To reduce costs, the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) will soon be offering its quarterly Fire Sprinkler Times newsletter as an e-mailed newsletter (e-newsletter). Please let us know the following:

- ○ Yes, I would like to receive the Fire Sprinkler Times as an e-newsletter.

Yes I would forward the e-newsletter to others including:

- ○ Others in my fire department/district
- ○ Elected Officials

Please also provide the e-mail address that you would prefer to have the e-newsletter sent to.

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- ○ No, I would like to continue receiving the printed edition of the Fire Sprinkler Times.

Send

* Required Information

The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) will soon be offering its quarterly Fire Sprinkler Times newsletter as an e-mailed newsletter (e-newsletter).

For those who would like to receive the Fire Sprinkler Times in an e-newsletter format, please e-mail NIFSAB@PPAcom.com with your contact information and a **"Yes, I would like to receive the Fire Sprinkler Times as an e-newsletter."** Please also provide the e-mail address that you would prefer to have the e-newsletter sent to.

If you wish to continue receiving the printed edition of the Fire Sprinkler Times by mail, please e-mail NIFSAB@PPAcom.com with your contact information and a **"No, I would like to continue receiving the printed edition of the Fire Sprinkler Times."**

To fill out the form online, please visit www.ppacom.com/clients/NIFSAB-eblast/survey.html

Thanks in advance for your response! ■