

# FIRE SPRINKLER TIMES

Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board • Summer 2003 Edition



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## Chicago City Council Weighs Nightclub Retrofit Ordinance

At its June 4th meeting, the Chicago City Council heard a recommendation for an ordinance to require sprinklers in new and existing nightclubs with an occupancy rating of 50 or more. Alderman Edward M. Burke (14th Ward), who introduced the stricter laws for nightclubs, was motivated in part by the concerns raised in the aftermath of two deadly nightclub incidents in February 2003, including one in Chicago.

If approved, the ordinance will result in an amendment to Chapter 13-84-331 of the Municipal Code of Chicago, entitled "Special requirements for nightclubs and restaurants." The change would mean that by July 1, 2005, all existing and new nightclubs with occupancy ratings exceeding 50 (including employees) must be equipped with sprinkler systems that meet the requirements of NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*. Surveys, plans and specifications for retrofit would be required to be submitted to the Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau and Water Department by July 1, 2004.

"The Rhode Island nightclub disaster served as a gruesome and tragic example of why cities across our nation, large and small, should review their fire codes and ensure that the public is adequately protected," Alderman Burke said. Many fire and life safety experts nationwide have noted that the presence of fire sprinklers would have dramatically changed the outcome of the fire.

One hundred employees and patrons were killed in the February 20, 2003 West Warwick fire at The Station nightclub when pyrotechnics deployed during a concert ignited flammable wall covering material. Earlier that same week at The Epitome/E2 nightclub in Chicago, a "crowd crush" situation resulted in the deaths of 21 patrons. "By their very nature, nightclubs present special fire protection and life safety challenges," said NFSA Midwest Regional Manager Dan Gengler. "With large numbers of people gathering in a single space, and with the introduction of alcoholic bev-



*The ordinance Ald. Burke introduced requiring fire sprinklers in Chicago nightclubs can prevent tragedies like the devastating fire at the Rhode Island club where 100 people died.*

erages and smoking materials, you increase the life safety challenges in the environment. Protecting these public assembly occupancies with automatic fire sprinkler systems just makes sense."

The 1999 United States Fire Administration (USFA) report *Establishing a Relationship Between Alcohol and Casualties of Fire* states human behavior exerts a powerful impact on the risk of fire. "By altering one's cognitive, physiological, and motor functions, alcohol increases the chance of starting a serious fire while at the same time reduces the chance of survival from a fire or burn injury," the report concludes.

Chicago's retrofit ordinance is just one of the many local and national responses to the Rhode Island nightclub tragedy. Immediately following the fire, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) brought together an emergency meeting of its assembly occupancies technical committee. The meeting resulted in the initiation of three Tentative Interim Amendments (TIA) that, if approved, would affect interim NFPA code requirements. One of those TIAs would increase the required use of automatic fire sprinklers in existing nightclubs. The committee also established a task force to look at the sprinkler requirement threshold. The

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# NIFSAB Updates

by Tom Lia, NIFSAB Executive Director

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## Northern Illinois Area Passes "100" Mark!

**100!** No not in age, but in the number of communities that have adopted stricter fire sprinkler ordinances by reducing the square foot requirements for building safety.

These towns utilize the new International Building Code as a base document, but they remove the square foot number or reduce that number as a limitation for providing fire sprinkler protection.

There is even more momentum toward building in fire safety measures. Building owners, insurers, and elected officials are now realizing that everyone else pays when sprinklers do not protect a building in the community.

The owner and tenant pay higher insurance costs and the town pays increased water supply requirements and a higher ISO rating. And, everyone pays either in lost income, lost wages or lost sales taxes when there is tremendous loss due to a fire.

The most recent example just occurred in Mokena on June 7 when a \$1,000,000 fire loss was incurred. This fire resulted in three businesses having to close, many people out of jobs, and a loss of sales tax to the community. Luckily, there were no major injuries.

Built in unincorporated Will County, which did not require fire sprinklers at

the time, and later annexed into Mokena, which had a 7,500 square foot threshold for required sprinkler installation, the building fell under the "grandfather" clause and was subsequently not protected.

We would not be reading about this occurrence if sprinklers protected the buildings. (See fire sprinkler activation page.)

Today, 24 towns have "zero" tolerance for fires. Thirteen towns require sprinklers in new homes and over 100 towns have dropped their fire sprinkler threshold requirements to require fire sprinklers in more of their new construction.

As a building owner of a nightclub, bar, or banquet hall, can you now afford not to look at retrofitting after our latest fire warning in the West Warwick, Rhode Island Club? What would have happened at the Epitome Night Club if it were a fire and not pepper spray?

As a community fire official, building official, and/or elected official, can you afford not to look at eliminating the "grandfather" clauses and create a timetable for fire sprinkler retrofit installation to protect your citizens and firefighters? ■

## Danley's Desk

**By Dave Danley**  
NIFSAB Fire Safety Consultant  
Serving Lake and McHenry Counties

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### Lessons Learned...

Many of life's lessons involve identifying problems and finding solutions. What can be changed to eliminate or minimize the effect of the problem?

With respect to fire safety and prevention we have been exposed to many lessons. Chicago has had more than its fair share of tragic fires. From the Iroquois Theater to Our Lady of Angels, the Paxton fire to recent high-rise fires that resulted in people being trapped and succumbing to the effects of fire. Other cities have contributed to our lesson plan. Boston with the Coconut Grove fire, the Beverly Hills Supper Club in Kentucky and the Station Nightclub fire in Rhode Island have also contributed heavily to our lessons to be learned. Each of these fires presented us with the loss of a large number of human lives as examples of preventable tragedy.

The Rhode Island nightclub fire resulted in 100 deaths. The families, friends and community as a whole asked the common question, "What could we have done to prevent this tragedy and what can be done to assure that it will not happen again?" They have petitioned the federal government and local officials to address the problem. The answer is clear and steps are underway to implement retrofit automatic fire sprinkler installation requirements in all buildings of assembly classification.

This is an interesting case study in that the initial cause of the loss of life was assigned to the use of pyrotechnics in the proximity of combustible insulation. The "problem" was quickly identified. Fire in a building of assembly occupancy has a high risk of significant loss of life. The "solution" was perhaps not so obvious. The first reaction was to outlaw the use of pyrotechnics in buildings of assembly. The second was to assure that building owners, managers and maintenance personnel use only fire code approved materials in inte-

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## NFSA Midwest Notes

By Dan Gengler, NFSA Midwest Regional Manager (IL, WI)

Contact Dan at 262-245-5255 or e-mail: [DanNFSA@aol.com](mailto:DanNFSA@aol.com) • [www.nfsawi.org](http://www.nfsawi.org)

### Admiring Alderman Burke for Introducing an Ordinance That Can Save Lives and Protect Firefighters

Before joining the National Fire Sprinkler Association, I served for 26 years on the Milwaukee Fire Department. Based on that experience, I know there are many members of the fire service who admire Chicago Alderman Edward Burke for recognizing that fire sprinklers are the best protection from fires in Chicago's nightclubs.

As discussed throughout this issue of the Sprinkler Times, Burke introduced a new fire

safety ordinance to the Chicago City Council that will make nightclubs safer. He said the Rhode Island nightclub disaster served as a gruesome and tragic example of why cities across our nation should review their fire codes and ensure that the public is adequately protected.

Burke also stated that many fire and life safety experts nationwide have noted that

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# Fire Sprinklers at Work: SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS

**MARCH 2003:**

## Good Shepard Methodist Church

**Bartlett, *The Examiner of Bartlett***

The Bartlett police and fire departments responded to a report of criminal damage to property and arson. During the night, unknown person(s) broke a window and entered the church. A fire was started in a bookcase by lighting a small book and placing it on top of the other books. The sprinkler system extinguished the fire.

*Bill O'Boyle, Fire Chief, Bartlett Fire Dept.*

## CertAir

**Lake in the Hills, *Daily Herald***

Algonquin/Lake in the Hills and Huntley firefighters were called to the business at 10:40 a.m. when a natural gas line in the building was disconnected. The air filled with gas and a spark from an unknown source set off the explosion.

"The fire extended to the drywall, ceiling and insulation of the business that builds duct work for furnaces," said Battalion Chief Charlie Teson of the Algonquin/Lake in the Hills Fire Protection District.

The sprinkler system in the building helped contain the fire, which was extinguished by firefighters who arrived at the scene. An employee of the company received minor burns to his face when the gas was ignited. No firefighters were injured.

*Steven Kite, Fire Chief, Algonquin Lake in the Hills Fire Protection District*

**APRIL 2003:**

## Georgios Hotel

**Orland Park**

Fire in a microwave was controlled by the activation of the sprinkler system, until the arrival of the fire department.

*Joe Jeraminas, FPB, Orland Fire District*

**MAY 2003:**

## Earth Tech

**Oak Brook, *Daily Herald***

An electrical failure in a computer monitor caused a small fire at an Oak Brook architectural firm that led to the evacuation of several employees, an Oak Brook Fire Department spokesperson said.

Fire alarms activated at 5:30 p.m. and sprinklers in the building doused the fire on the second floor at the center of the building, said Battalion Chief Jim Bodony.

About a dozen people inside Earth Tech on Butterfield Road left the building before firefighters arrived. No one was injured.

*Tom Stanfa, FPB, Oak Brook Fire Dept.*

**JUNE 2003:**

## Alden-Poplar Creek Nursing Home

**Hoffman Estates, *Daily Herald***

At 7:53 p.m. Hoffman Estates firefighters were called to the scene at the Alden-Poplar Creek Nursing Home on Barrington Road. Employees reported smoke on the third floor where the occupants had to be evacuated. Firefighters located a fire in a fourth-floor storage room, which had been mostly extinguished by a single sprinkler head. No one was injured, \$5,000 in damages.

*James Eaves, Fire Chief, Hoffman Estates Fire Dept.*

## USF Holland Motor Express

**Rockford, *Rockford Register Star***

At 9:45 p.m. a fire spread, but was limited to five truck trailers parked at the terminal's western loading dock. Firefighters and a sprinkler system worked together to keep the fire from spreading into the building.

According to Rockford District Fire Chief Bill Beaman, workers accidentally punctured a load of aerosol paint canisters with a forklift as it was being moved into a truck.

"When the district chief rolled in, he saw four trailers going and the key thing was to keep it out of the building," Beaman said. "What really helped us with that was the sprinkler."

*William Robertson, Fire Chief, Rockford Fire Department*

## Townhome

**Aurora, *Beacon News***

According to Aurora Battalion Chief John Lehman, residents had discarded coals from a barbecue into a garbage can in the garage of a townhome. Firefighters were called when the can and garage caught fire. An automatic sprinkler system kept the damage to a minimum.

*Kent Becker, Fire Marshal, Aurora Fire Department*

## West Chicago Fire Protection District Successful Activations

**November 11, 2002: Central Ink**

A fire in the chemical process area was extinguished by a single sprinkler.

**December 8, 2002: Aircraft Hangar**

A fire under one of the planes activated the sprinkler system, which kept the fire in check until magnesium metals from the landing gear could be extinguished. Damage was limited to three of the 19 planes stored in the hangar.

**February 8, 2003: Excel Laser**

A single sprinkler extinguished a fire in the women's washroom.

**February 11, 2003: United Recycling Inc.**

A deluge system activated extinguishing a small fire in a shredder. The same system activated again April 7, 2003 extinguishing another small fire.

*Joseph Buenrostro, West Chicago Fire Protection District*

## Nightclub Successful Activations

**Fires at Modesto Club Force Evacuation**

**of 600 (*Modesto Bee, June 15, 2003*)**

According to Fire Chief Jim Miguel, someone started three small fires in a second-floor hallway above a busy downtown Modesto nightclub, but the 600 people inside got out safely.

"The flames had gone up the wall to the ceiling before the automatic sprinkler system came on," Miguel said.

Club security officers were alerted and immediately began evacuating the club, which has a capacity of 750 people.

"Thank goodness for the fire sprinkler system," Miguel said. "Three sprinklers popped, and they prevented it from being a real serious fire."

"We feel blessed the fire protection and evacuation systems worked," he said. "Not one person was injured leaving the building, and everyone left in an orderly manner."

**Pyrotechnics Also Blamed for Small Fire in Minneapolis Club**

**(*The Associated Press, February 21, 2003*)**

Note: This fire occurred the day before the R.I. nightclub tragedy.

About 120 people escaped unharmed after a band's pyrotechnic display apparently set the ceiling on fire at a Minneapolis club.

The Jet City Fix was playing its encore at the Fine Line Music Cafe when it set off the display that started the fire about 7:15 p.m., fire officials said. The crowd was moved quickly out of the building and the fire extinguished within 15 minutes.

The sprinkler system activated and all the patrons were out of the club before the fire department arrived. ■

Send your "Successful Activation" stories to: Tom Lia, NIFSAB, 62 Orland Square Drive, Suite 203, Orland Park, IL 60462; or fax them to: 708-403-4771.

## Deadliest Assembly Fires

### 10 deadliest public assembly fires in U.S. history

- Iroquois Theater, Chicago, IL, December 30, 1903, **602 killed.**
- Coconut Grove night club, Boston, MA, November 28, 1942, **492 killed.**
- Conway's Theater, Brooklyn, NY, December 5, 1876, **285 killed.**
- Rhythm Club dance hall, Natchez, MS, April 23, 1940, **207 killed.**
- Rhodes Opera House, Boyertown, PA, January 12, 1908, **170 killed.**
- Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus tent, Hartford, CT, July 6, 1944, **168 killed.**
- Beverly Hills Supper Club, Southgate, KY, May 28, 1977, **165 killed.**
- Richmond Theater, Richmond, VA, December 26, 1811, **160 killed** (including the governor and a former U.S. senator from the state).
- The Station nightclub, West Warwick, RI, February 20, 2003, **100 killed.**
- Happy Land social club, Bronx, NY, March 25, 1990, **87 killed.**

### 5 deadliest nightclub fires in U.S. history

- Coconut Grove nightclub, Boston, MA, November 28, 1942, **492 killed.**
- Rhythm Club dance hall, Natchez, MS, April 23, 1940, **207 killed.**
- Beverly Hills Supper Club, Southgate, KY, May 28, 1977, **165 killed.**
- The Station nightclub, West Warwick, RI, February 20, 2003, **100 killed.**
- Happy Land social club, Bronx, NY, March 25, 1990, **87 killed.**

Source: [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

## Rhode Island House OKs Fire-Safety Bill

By Mark Arsenault

Excerpt from Journal State House Bureau

Fire-safety legislation inspired by The Station nightclub disaster sped with unanimous support through the House of Representatives and a key Senate committee June 12th. Governor Carcieri said he will sign it.

The legislation would end the "grandfather" exemption from modern fire code, require more mandatory sprinklers, ban pyrotechnics in most indoor venues, and provide fire inspectors with greater power.

"It's sad that codes seem to get tougher after disasters," said Rep. Norman Landroche, D-West Warwick, who introduced the House version of the bill. He acknowledged, "even this piece of legislation is not 100-percent preventative.

"But certainly this is a clear path to ensure a safer public and a more responsible business owner in respect to fire safety."

The House of Representatives approved the 37-page "Comprehensive Fire Safety Act of 2003" by a 71-to-0 vote. The bill is directly drawn from the recommendations of a special legislative commission on fire safety.

Lime Rock Fire District Chief Frank Sylvester summed up the bill's momentum yesterday: "Any senator or representative that opposes this piece of legislation opposes the safety of Rhode Island," he said before the Senate Commerce Committee.

Christie Robbins, of Fall River, who lost five friends in the fire, pleaded with the Commerce Committee to approve the bill. "Please pass this code," she said. "I know you can keep us safe."

Fire officials have been strongly behind the bill. "It should be passed without hesitation," urged state Fire Marshal Irving Owens. ■



In honor of his daughter, Tammy Mattera-Housa, who died in The Station nightclub disaster, Ray Mattera developed this message that appears on 20 buses for one month.

Mattera and his son-in-law raised funds, mostly from their co-workers, to pay for the messages.

"My daughter would have done it," Mattera said. "It won't bring Tammy back, but now I'm doing it for our children and grandchildren."

Mattera said he hopes legislation requiring fire sprinklers and better fire safety will not only pass in Rhode Island, but nationwide.

## NFPA 5000 – A Model Code for Present and Future Building and Construction Needs

By Russ Sanders, Central Regional Manager, NFPA

The tragic events that occurred in Rhode Island and Chicago earlier this year have made the mandatory installation of sprinkler systems in certain facilities a serious topic of conversation throughout the country. Many states and municipalities see the value of a fire sprinkler system as a cost-effective and life-saving device that is an important part of preparing for and responding to fire-related incidents. In response to these tragic events, professionals are taking action to install fire sprinkler systems in many buildings, including residences and high-rise buildings, in the hopes of saving lives now and preventing similar events in the future.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is dedicated to life and fire safety. NFPA has published NFPA 5000™ *Building Construction and Safety Code*,™ an integral part of the *Comprehensive Consensus Codes*™ (C3™), the only set of codes developed through a process accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

From the beginning of NFPA's building code development project, it was agreed that safeguards for firefighter and emergency responder safety would be a founding principle of NFPA 5000. Consequently, not only does the code address every aspect of design

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## Seventy Spectators Get Close View at Dramatic Libertyville House Fire Demonstration

Demonstrating that residential fire sprinklers can save lives, the Libertyville Fire Department and the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) hosted a dramatic demonstration in a vacant home in Libertyville. Most of the 70 spectators were members of the fire service. The demonstration provided them a close view of two home fires, the first with fire sprinklers, and the second without sprinklers.

According to NIFSAB Fire Safety Consultant Dave Danley, one room in the house had sidewall mounted fire sprinklers on adjacent walls. Another wall in the room had a section cut out and Plexiglas installed so viewers could watch the sprinklers activate.

"It was the first time we've done a demonstration like this with sidewall mounted sprinklers," Danley said. "Approximately two minutes 30 seconds after we started the fire, both sprinklers activated and extinguished the fire. There was so little damage. Really just a little water needed to be cleaned up."

The sprinklers were disconnected and the second fire was started. According to Danley, it spread very quickly and flashover occurred. Libertyville firefighters were on hand with hoses and equipment to fight the fire.



*Libertyville firefighters ready to fight the fire without fire sprinklers in the demonstration home.*

"This is a great experience for members of the fire service," says Libertyville Fire Marshal Robert Kleinheinz. "Most of our experience with sprinklers is responding after they activate when the fire is out or under control. This demonstration allowed viewers to see fire sprinklers in action. It really is fascinating to watch the fire get just hot enough to activate the sprinklers, then actually extinguish the fire. It gives you a real understanding of the life-saving value fire sprinklers can offer homeowners." ■

## Danley's Desk *continued from page 2*

rior finishes. Knowing that humans seldom do what they ought to do and are even very unpredictable in behavior, a more substantial "solution" needed to be identified. That solution is clearly protecting lives with fire sprinklers. Right after that fire, lab tests found that two sprinkler heads over the fire area would have extinguished the fire and prevented any loss of life.

A fire in a nightclub in Minneapolis a few days prior to the Station Nightclub fire provided the obvious answer. That nightclub had a similar design and circumstances as the Rhode Island nightclub. The Minneapolis fire was extinguished by the automatic fire sprinkler system and not a single life was lost. The "problem" was the same and the "solution" was obvious. Fire sprinkler systems work and save lives. Regardless of the cause of the fire, fire sprinkler systems have prevented catastrophic loss of life in 100% of the fires where they operated.

The Chicago City Council has before it a proposal to amend the building code to require

retrofit installation of an automatic sprinkler system within a reasonable time period. Construction of new assembly occupancy buildings requires the installation of a fire sprinkler system. Existing assembly occupancies are "grand-fathered" and are not required to provide this level of protection. Grandfathering in buildings of this occupancy classification clearly sets the stage for catastrophic loss of life. Life safety and life saving automatic fire sprinkler systems should never be traded for potential high loss of human life. The "problem" is clear. Fire in unprotected assembly occupancies is not an acceptable risk. The answer is clear. Knowing that fire is a high-risk element in buildings of assembly, automatic fire sprinkler protection reduces that risk to an acceptable level.

Pass the Final Examination. Do what ought to be done. Support the retrofit installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems in all building of assembly regardless of age. After all, it is the responsible thing to do. ■

## Chicago's Deadliest Major Fires

**1904:** Chicago's Iroquois Theater fire resulted in 604 deaths from flames that began with scenery curtains near a lamp. During the early part of this stage fire, the rolling fire curtain was dropped down to contain the fire. However, the curtain became entangled in a wire and never fully closed, thus exposing the audience to the fire.

Flashover quickly ensued and literally incinerated the trapped theatergoers. It was only then that codes were changed to insure fire protection in assembly occupancies to include stage sprinklers and doors that swung in the direction of occupants' travel.

**1946:** Chicago's LaSalle Hotel suffered a major fire and loss of life when 62 people and a firefighter were killed. The LaSalle Hotel was known as the "Titanic" of Chicago buildings and hailed as a "fire-proof" structure that could not be destroyed by flames any more than the mighty British ship was supposed to be swallowed by the ocean.

Regardless, fire in a second floor atrium vented through an opening in the elevator shaft causing upper floor deaths from fire and smoke that totally disregarding the allegedly "fireproof" construction features.

**1958:** Our Lady of Angels School in Chicago, one of the worst fires in American history. Ninety-five children and adults perished.

A wastepaper basket fire in an unprotected stairwell led to fire extension throughout the second floor roof void space. Children and nuns were trapped in their rooms and could not escape due to high window ledges. The fire then entered those rooms from the hallway through open and non-fire rated transoms.

After the fire, Chicago changed its building code to require compartmentation, eliminate transoms, enclose stairwells and provide fire sprinklers in high hazard areas.

Yet, it took former Governor James Edgar until 1992 to sign a State of Illinois school fire sprinkler law after a subsequent Gurnee high school and Park Forest elementary school were destroyed by flames.

**1976:** A fire at the Wincrest Nursing Home in Chicago resulted in 24 deaths. Then Mayor Richard J. Daley appointed a "Blue Ribbon Committee" to find solutions to the nursing home fire. The result of that committee's findings concluded fire sprinklers and compartmentation should be used in all existing as well as new Chicago nursing homes.

**1992:** A highly publicized fire at the Paxton Hotel resulted in 20 deaths. Videotape captured jumpers leaping from the building as well as dangerous ladder rescues. After the deadly incident, current Mayor Richard M. Daley called for fire sprinklers to be installed in all single-room occupancy hotels. Daley later backed off the safety measure after experiencing political pressure from building owners who claimed retrofitting expense would force them to close their doors and put poor occupants into the streets. The eventual compromise found less-protective fire alarms and voice signal alarms being installed instead.

## Golf Outing Event Nets More Than \$61,000 For Children Who Suffered Burn Injuries



*Keith Magnuson,  
Guest Speaker*

The Illinois Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association and the Illinois Fire Prevention Association raised more than \$61,000 at their eighth annual Illinois Burn Camp Golf Invitational at the Glen Flora Country Club in Waukegan, Illinois June 9, 2003.

Funds were raised through sponsorships mostly from members of the fire sprinkler industry, live and silent auctions and a raffle. Former Chicago Blackhawks Hockey player Keith Magnuson was the guest speaker. He also golfed with a threesome from Chicago Backflow, Inc., the event's Platinum sponsor.

At the dinner, Magnuson moderated the silent auction where he helped raise even more money by donating hockey jerseys and sports gear, then autographed them for the highest bidder. Over 140 golfers participated in the event.

Over the last eight years, this event has raised more than a quarter million dollars for Illinois children who have survived burn injuries and attend "Camp I Am Me." This year, the event also raised \$12,000 for the Loyola University Burn Center and \$6,000 for burn prevention programs.

"We are very happy with the event," said Fred Kroll, event chairperson. "This was our most successful year thanks to Keith for being our spokesperson and adding to our silent auction and because of the commitment from our industry. We are also pleased to extend our contributions to the Loyola Burn Center and fire prevention programs through the NFSA Educational Fund," Kroll said. Members of Illinois Burn Prevention Invitational Committee include: Fred Kroll, Alliance Fire Protection, Chairman; Co-Chairpersons, Amos Miner, United States Fire Protection; Cary Nicol, Viking SupplyNet; Don Smith, Chicago Backflow, Inc. and Danielle Sandfox, Fox Sprinkler Supply. ■



*Mike Figolah, President of the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance accepted this year's donation to Camp I Am Me. (Left to right) Amos Minor, Co-Chairman, Fred Kroll, Chairman of the Illinois Burn Prevention Golf Invitational and Mike Figolah.*

## NFPA 5000 – A Model Code *continued from page 4*

and construction of buildings and structures, NFPA 5000 also is the first-ever model building code to mandate, as a functional goal of the code, firefighter safety as part of the building construction process.

This approach will foster closer working relationships between building officials and fire service personnel in the building design process. These provisions also will facilitate the coordination of related provisions contained within the 2003 edition of NFPA 1, *Uniform Fire Code™* and other important fire company responsibilities like pre-incident planning and emergency rescue/operation plans. In fact, NFPA's fire prevention code is the only national model code that we are aware of that has a retroactive requirement for sprinklers in buildings that are 75 feet and higher.

NFPA 5000 also contains provisions for every aspect of design and construction of buildings and structures, as well as the creation of building systems for health, safety,

comfort, and convenience. The building code is the only building code featuring an occupancy-based format, along with integrated provisions for both performance-based design options and the rehabilitative use of existing buildings.

It is a fact that using sprinklers can typically reduce the chances of fire-related fatalities and average property loss by one-half to two-thirds. NFPA 13, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems*, the most widely adopted sprinkler standard in the United States, is incorporated into NFPA 5000. Developed 100 years ago, the standard provides minimum requirements for the design and installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems, including the classification of occupancies and commodities and system components. Key to this standard is provisions that provide a reasonable degree of protection from fire to life and property. Today's NFPA 13 integrates key infor-

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## NFSA Midwest Notes

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the presence of fire sprinklers would have dramatically changed the outcome of the fire.

Members of the fire service know first hand the life-saving value of fire sprinklers. Fire sprinklers have been saving lives and protecting property for more than a century. Most firefighters have experienced a successful activation, where we'd arrive at the scene to find one or two sprinklers activated and the fire either extinguished or under control, allowing occupants to safely exit the building.

In May, a fire sprinkler system prevented a fire from spreading in the 14th floor hallway of The Pfister Hotel in downtown Milwaukee. More than 100 years old, The Pfister is Wisconsin's most historic hotel. The sprinkler system was retrofit five years ago.

According to Captain Anthony Wichman, Milwaukee Fire Department, a member of the housekeeping staff emptied an ashtray in a trash can in the hallway blocking the entrance to the room. While the housekeeping staff member cleaned the bathroom, the fire spread throughout the cart to the hallway walls. Smoke activated the smoke alarm. The heat from the fire eventually activated a single sprinkler in the hallway. When firefighters arrived on the 14th floor, the fire was extinguished by a single sprinkler.

The cart was filled with towels and combustible cleaning supplies. The fire had the potential to cause extreme smoke and heat damage on that floor and probably the floors above and below. The fire sprinkler probably saved the staff member's life because the burning cart prevented her from being able to exit the room. We don't know how many other lives the fire sprinkler saved or how much property damage was prevented because the sprinkler did such a great job.

Thirty firefighters responded to the fire alarm. Wichman said they were able to send 20 firefighters back to the station in minutes because of that sprinkler system. He also said that when a building is protected with sprinklers, it prevents firefighters from being in danger.

Not only will Burke's ordinance protect the people who like to visit Chicago's nightclubs, it will, just as importantly, protect firefighters from flashover as they risk their lives fighting fires.

For more information, contact Dan Gengler at 262-245-5258. ■

## Nielsen Named Recipient of Wayne Leucht Memorial Award

The Northern Illinois Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) and the Illinois Fire Prevention Association (IFPA) announced that Robert Nielsen, Director, Fire Prevention Bureau, Westmont Fire Department, is the recipient of the NFSA's Wayne Leucht Memorial Award.

In memory of fallen firefighter Wayne Leucht, fire inspector from the Northbrook Fire Department, the award was created to recognize

members of the local fire service who personify the spirit and dedication of the fire service. 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.

"We are very happy to recognize Bob for this award," said Don Smith, Chairman of the Northern Illinois Chapter of the NFSA. "He was selected because of the vital role he played in increasing the level of fire protection through the installation of fire sprinklers in existing and new commercial buildings in both Oak Brook and Westmont. Bob has also continually championed the benefits of fire sprinklers through his affiliation at the Illinois Fire Inspectors and Illinois Fire Chiefs associations."

Nielsen began his career 40 years ago as a firefighter with the Air Force. After becoming a firefighter with the Oak Brook Fire Department, Nielsen moved up the ranks, eventually becoming chief in 1987. During his career with Oak Brook, the village was one of the first Chicago suburbs to pass a minimum 1,000 sq. ft. ordinance requiring all new and existing buildings to be protected with a fire sprinkler system.

According to Nielsen, the biggest accomplishments were retrofitting the hotels, movie theaters and Oak Brook Mall.

"The anchor stores in the mall had fire sprinklers, none of the other stores did," Nielsen said. "Anyone who renewed a lease in the mall had to retrofit the space."

According to Nielsen, the village board recognized the importance of fire safety to pro-



Westmont Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau Director Robert Nielsen was the recipient of the Wayne Leucht Memorial Award. (Left to right) Bob Nielsen and NIFSAB Chairman, Don Smith.

tect people and property. "The board realized their economic risk after there was a major fire in a store in Old Orchard," he said.

Nielsen attributes the Oak Brook success to strong political support and because the code allowed combination systems. He said it was cost effective for the bigger buildings and high-rises to retrofit because they could use the standpipe system.

Nielsen retired from Oak Brook in 1997. Eighty-five percent of all existing buildings were retrofitted when he left. He joined the Westmont Fire Department as director of the fire prevention bureau. Working with Westmont Chief Frank Trout, they lowered Westmont's square footage and code terminology.

"I'm honored to receive this award," Nielsen said. "I have never found a building that couldn't be sprinklered. I credit the various sprinkler contractors I worked with throughout the years. Many of the buildings we had to retrofit were often very challenging."

Nielsen is the fourth recipient of the Leucht Memorial Award, following Chief Danley of Barrington Fire Protection District, Battalion Chief Dan Tholotowsky of Pleasantview Fire Protection District and Division Chief Alan Berkowsky of Evanston Fire Department.

Nielsen received the award, along with a \$1,000 donation to the charity of his choice during The Eighth Annual Illinois Burn Camp Golf Invitational at the Glen Flora Country Club in Waukegan on June 9th. Nielsen chose the Lemont and Westmont Children's Fire Safe Houses as the recipients of the \$1,000 donation. ■

## Nightclub Ordinance

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TIA's will be reviewed as part of the NFPA Standards Council meeting in July. If approved, they will apply to the 2003 Editions of NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code* and NFPA 5000, *Building Construction and Safety Code*.

According to NFPA Central Regional Manager Russ Sanders, anytime you increase the use of sprinklers without compromising fire safety in some other fashion, it's a good thing.

"Sprinklers have a long history and long track record of success in saving lives and property," Sanders said. "Sprinklers are a single, but critically important component of a safe building. Any move to increase the use of sprinklers is a move in the right direction."

According to a February 18, 2003 Star Tribune article, a February 17th fire at a music club in Minneapolis serves as a memorable example of the life-saving power of automatic fire sprinklers. Warm-up band Jet City Fix set off pyrotechnics that ignited the club's ceiling. None of the 120 patrons was injured by the fire and the club's sprinklers extinguished the fire in minutes. "I'm shocked, but happy that everyone got out," club owner Dario Anselmo told the Star Tribune.

"The contrast between the successful outcome of the Minneapolis club fire and the devastating loss of life at the West Warwick fire just can't be overstated," Gengler said. "It's unfortunate that the stories with happy endings move off the front page so fast."

The ordinance is expected to be considered at a Chicago City Council hearing in July. ■

## Retrofitting Nightclubs Reduces Insurance Premiums

In addition to protecting lives and property, nightclub owners and operators can also benefit from reduced fire insurance premiums when retrofitting fire sprinklers.

According to George Stoffers, certified insurance counselor, nightclub operators should anticipate a reduction of about 60% on fire insurance premiums for installment of an approved standard fire sprinkler system.

"This improvement and the reduced risk would probably qualify the insured for a preferred rating procedure under major items of coverage and make the insured eligible for special extended coverage forms," Stoffers said. ■



## Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board

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

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For more information about fire sprinklers, contact Tom Lia, Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, 866-264-3722

You can also contact Tom via e-mail: [sprinktoml@aol.com](mailto:sprinktoml@aol.com)



## NFPA 5000 – A Model Code

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mation from more than 40 NFPA documents and is the most comprehensive sprinkler reference ever published.

Also part of the C3 set is NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code*®, the most comprehensive code addressing life safety for fire and similar emergency situations in new and existing buildings. The *Life Safety Code*® can be used in conjunction with a building code or alone in jurisdictions that do not have a building code in place.

The benefits of using NFPA 5000, NFPA 13, NFPA 101, and other codes and standards within the C3 set also extend beyond code adoption. NFPA channels its resources into a variety of public safety efforts, including broad public education programs, independent research initiatives, and continuing education services. All of these efforts are part of NFPA's commitment to enhancing public safety and providing the highest level of protection. For more information on the set of C3 codes offered by NFPA and its partners, go to [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org) ■

## WBBM NewsRadio Listeners Hear Three New Fire Sprinkler Messages



*Chief Jim Spiegel, Countryside Fire Protection District, Linda Strom, WBBM, and Chief Dan Hermes, Pleasantview Fire Protection District in the WBBM NewsRadio 780 studio.*

People who tune into the World News Round Up at 6p.m. on WBBM can hear three new messages sponsored by the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board.

The first message ran the first week in June, starting on the day Alderman Edward Burke introduced the new fire safety ordinance to the Chicago City Council requiring nightclubs to be retrofitted with fire sprinkler systems. The spot informed listeners there are hundreds of public assembly establishments in Chicago that do not have

fire sprinkler protection, and that passing the ordinance can prevent tragedies like the devastating fire at the Rhode Island club where 100 people died.

The other two spots were recorded by fire chiefs Dan Hermes, Pleasantview Fire Protection District and Jim Spiegel, Countryside Fire Protection District. Their messages are based on personal experiences with fire sprinklers.

Chief Spiegel tells listeners one of his biggest accomplishments is working with builders and developers who agree to build safe homes by protecting them with fire sprinklers. He ends the spot saying fire sprinklers are the next generation in home fire safety, and that's why he has them in his home.

Chief Hermes says there is nothing more satisfying than arriving on the scene of a fire and finding a single fire sprinkler activated. He also talks about how his department is growing a sprinkler tree. Every time they have a save, they take the sprinkler back to the station and add it to the tree.

The two new spots are scheduled to start running in September. ■