

## Illinois Fire and Building Officials Meet to Strengthen Commitment to Home Fire Sprinkler Protection

Orland Park, Ill. (February 25, 2014) — Nearly 26 years since the Village of Long Grove enacted fire sprinkler requirements for new construction homes, Illinois now has 92 communities with such requirements. Many of those communities' officials attended a special meeting at Lewis University's Oak Brook campus this February. Local fire and building officials discussed their home fire sprinkler requirements and shared information about why those requirements play an important role in protecting their citizens and firefighters. They also heard from top state and national fire safety officials.

“There is a continuing need to educate newly elected officials and fire and building officials who may not have been in their current positions during the time that home fire sprinkler requirements were enacted in their communities,” say Tom Lia, executive director of the nonprofit Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board.

Illinois State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis discussed the importance of home fire sprinklers in preventing fire deaths and injuries. His office reported that there were 117 fire deaths in the past 13 months — all but one fire occurred in residential occupancies. The deaths reflected the most vulnerable populations, mostly the very young children and the elderly.



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Russ Sanders, regional director for the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), echoed Matkaitis' statements and spoke about the educational tools available to communities through the “Fire Sprinkler Initiative” program, which is an NFPA effort that aims to bring fire sprinkler protection to homes throughout the United States. Sanders also reaffirmed that the home fire sprinkler requirements currently enacted in 92 Illinois communities are a reflection of the requirements in the latest national model codes. Only two states — California and Maryland — top Illinois with statewide adoption of the national codes requiring fire sprinklers in new construction homes.

Officials from Illinois communities that already have enacted home fire sprinkler requirements spoke about their experiences in providing better fire protection to residents through the incorporation of home fire sprinklers, including a building official from Lake Bluff and fire officials from Matteson and La Grange Park. In particular, La Grange Park, which is a teardown/rebuild community, recently reached completion of its 50th sprinklered home.

A representative from the national nonprofit Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC) also presented information about the organization's "Built For Life Fire Department" program. There are 2,500 fire departments nationwide that have joined the program and committed to making home fire sprinklers a part of their education outreach efforts. HFSC provides the fire departments with resources and its myriad of free educational pieces to educate the public, elected officials, real estate and insurance agents, water supply officials, and others involved in the decision to include fire sprinklers in a community's homes.

"This event was an important opportunity for fire and building officials to strengthen their commitments to the fire safety of their communities by sharing and exchanging vital information about home fire sprinkler education and advocacy," says Lia. "In order for Illinois to continue to advance and ensure the fire safety of its residents, it is up to local communities to continue passing local home fire sprinkler ordinances that prevent future injuries and deaths."

The latest Illinois communities to pass requirements for fire sprinklers in new construction homes include Riverdale, Westchester, and the Addison Fire Protection District.

**MEDIA: High-res photos available at <http://www.ppacom.com/pr/nifsab-officials-meet-strengthen-commitment.html>.**

**About the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board**

The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) is a Not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting progressive legislation, raising public awareness, and educating code officials and governmental policy makers by demonstrating the proven performance of fire sprinklers in saving both lives and property. For more info, visit [www.firesprinklerassoc.org](http://www.firesprinklerassoc.org).

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