



Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board

Save Lives. Protect Property.

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Deadly Apartment Fire That Killed Eight People Raises Questions About Chicago's Fire Codes

Orland Park, IL (August 26, 2018) – A deadly fire in a three-story apartment building killed six children and two adults in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood early this morning. It stands as a reminder of the importance of working smoke alarms and fire sprinklers and their important role in today's building codes.

Building codes require new apartments over 30 feet must be protected with fire sprinklers. Chicago's current code requires sprinklers in new high rise buildings but not apartment buildings less than 80 feet.

According to Tom Lia, executive director, Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB), fire sprinklers were not required when the apartment building, which burned this morning, was built.

“Sadly, if the same building were built today, Chicago codes would not require fire sprinklers,” said Lia.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fires today are deadly because modern furnishings are made out of synthetics that burn quickly, and they produce deadly and toxic smoke. A fire can be fatal in less than two minutes (nfpa.org 2018.)

“Smoke alarms warn you when you have a fire, and fire sprinklers stop a fire from becoming deadly,” said Lia. “Chicago needs to look at the data. Two minutes is not enough time to escape a fire, especially when people are sleeping, and there are children in the home who cannot escape by themselves.”

Earlier this summer, a massive and fast-moving fire in Prospect Heights spread to three apartment buildings. More than 100 families lost their homes and their belongings.

“Fortunately, there were no fatalities in the Prospect Heights fire,” said Lia. “That fire occurred during the day when people were either awake or not home. The outcome may have been different if the fire occurred at night while people were sleeping.”

Lia also commented about the property damage in the Prospect Heights fire and how fire sprinklers could have changed the outcome of the fire.

“That fire was devastating with more than 500 people displaced, \$10 million in property damage, and not to mention, the cost involved when 50 fire departments responded to that fire,” said Lia. “If fire sprinklers were installed, the heat from the fire would have activated the closest sprinkler within seconds, automatically controlling the fire or put it out. The damage would have been limited to the room of origin.”

Unlike Chicago, Prospect Heights codes will require fire sprinklers when this apartment complex is rebuilt.

[According to the U.S. Fire Administration](#), prior to today's fire in Chicago, fatalities in Illinois are higher this year compared to this time last year with 78 deaths.

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