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REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

NATIONAL AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER AND BOX 108
FIRE CONTROL ASSOCIATION, INC REDMOND, WASHINGTON 98052



National Automatic Sprinkler and Fire Control Association, Inc.

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March 29, 1976

Representative Bob Bradley
601 North Bragsaw
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

Dear Bob:

The members of the Legislature of the great State of Alaska should be commended for their forward looking posture they have assumed in the area of fire protection.

Recognizing that the members of the Legislature are willing to accept comments on pending legislation from industry as well as the fire protection community at large, we offer the following suggestion with respect to House Bills #818 and #841, for your consideration.

We suggest inserting the following at line 13 of both Bills:

"This section does not apply to living units equipped with an approved automatic fire extinguishing system."

The reasons for this suggestion are many and we offer the following supportive documentation.

The National Safety Council some years ago issued the following statement:
"Automatic Sprinkler Systems provide the greatest single 'Safety to Life' feature available in the fire protection field. Not only can they sound an alarm, but they will immediately start fighting the fire when activated. The automatic sprinklers are by far the most reliable and effective means of fire extinguishment. Other forms of protective equipment, as well as automatic alarms, have their special place, but none can be an effective substitute for an automatic sprinkler system."

It further states:

"An automatic alarm system is not a substitute for an automatic sprinkler system and should be considered only as a necessary minimum."

After studying numerous fires the National Fire Protection Association has incorporated the following conclusion in the Life Safety Code:

"Experience shows that automatic sprinklers properly installed and maintained, are the most effective of any of the various safeguards against loss of life by fire."

A representative from the National Fire Protection Association has stated:

". . . in the present state of the art, the most practical system available to perform the function of detection and control of a fire is the automatic sprinkler system".

In 1959 and 1960 the Ford Foundation's Educational Facilities Laboratories conducted a series of 228 fire tests in five Los Angeles schools. Among their conclusions were the following:

- 1) Untenable smoke conditions invariably preceded untenable heat conditions in every test. Any deaths which could have occurred (by pre-established criteria) would have resulted from smoke and toxic gases, a by-product of combustion.
- 2) In every instance where complete automatic sprinkler protection was tested neither untenable smoke nor untenable heat conditions existed anywhere in the building.
- 3) Automatic smoke and heat detectors (automatic alarms) did not protect against loss of life in 29% of the cases in which automatic alarms were tested.

The National Fire Protection Association in its January 1974 Fire Journal published an article entitled The Effect of Structural Characteristics on Dwelling Fire Fatalities by W. J. Christian, Consulting Engineer, Underwriters' Laboratories, Inc. From this analysis of one and two family dwelling fires nationwide, it was determined that:

"... unconsciousness and incapacitation are the main reasons victims do not escape from dwelling fires".

It was also determined that:

"A large percentage of fatal dwelling fires (36%) involve victims who would have been unable to escape even if they had been warned in time and, apparently, control of the generation and transmission of toxic fire products would be required to improve the survival chances for such occupants."

Smoke detection devices certainly do provide a limited amount of fire warning, but an automatic sprinkler system accomplishes much more. Each sprinkler in the system serves a dual purpose; first, it responds individually to fire as a detector, and then as an expellant of water which is a extinguishing agent. And both acts are performed automatically.

It is my most sincere hope that you will review the above supportive documentation as it applies to the pending legislation. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Cordially yours,



William G. Woodrow
Regional Executive Coordinator
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon,
Montana, Washington, Wyoming)

WGW:jw

Copy to Representative Richard K. Union