Vermont Fire Chief Calls for Residential Sprinklers after Fire Destroys Home

COLCHESTER, VT — 2/9/2011- Firefighters spent nearly six hours Wednesday battling a blaze that eventually destroyed a home in Colchester. The homeowners escaped before flames engulfed the home. Firefighters responded at about 6:30 a.m., and had trouble throughout the morning hauling water to the fire from hydrants about a half-mile away, Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Company Chief Mike Chmielewski said. “The biggest problem we had was a lack of water,” Chmielewski said. Tankers transporting water to the fire were too wide to pass one another, and struggled to turn around on the narrow road, which was flanked by tall snow banks, he said. By 8 a.m., most of the building had burned to the ground.

Chmielewski and Mallets Bay Fire Department Chief David Scibek, who together have asked the Colchester Selectboard to require automatic sprinkler systems in many new homes, said such a system likely would have saved the home.

“If they had residential sprinklers, the house would be standing today,” Chmielewski said.

In October, the Selectboard shelved the fire chiefs’ proposal. Opponents questioned the relative benefits of sprinklers and said the sprinkler mandate would have boosted the cost of new housing.
Residential Fire Deaths in New England!

- 1 dead – Occurred Tuesday, 1/25 – Yarmouth, MA – A woman was killed in home fire. The cause of the fire is under investigation.
- 1 dead – Occurred Sunday, 1/23 – Johnson, RI – A 49-year-old man was killed in a home fire. The cause of the fire is under investigation.
- 1 dead – Occurred Friday, 2/4 – Bedford, MA – A 69-year-old man was killed in a home fire. The cause is under investigation.
- 1 dead – Occurred Tuesday, 2/8 – Manchester, NH – A 53-year-old man was killed in a home fire. The cause of the fire is under investigation.
- 1 dead – Occurred Wednesday, 2/9 – Readfield, ME – A person was killed in a home fire. The cause of the fire is under investigation.
- 2 dead – Occurred Thursday, 2/17 – Westfield, MA – An 84-year-old woman and her 82-year-old husband were killed in a home fire. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

If you know of any fire deaths or sprinkler activations in your area contact me with the information please. travers@nfsa.org

Legislative and Regulatory Watch, Local News & Notes

Connecticut - STATE CODES & STANDARDS COMMITTEE CODES AMENDMENT SUBCOMMITTEE - The Code Amendment Subcommittee of the State Codes and Standards Committee voted October 13, 2010 to accept the State Building Official’s recommendation to delete the sprinkler requirement from the Residential Code and appoint a study group to answer specific questions and concerns that were expressed in the recommendation. The new Residential Sprinkler Work Group will be meeting monthly. If you would like to attend these meetings please contact Robert J. Ross, Robert.Ross@ct.gov

Connecticut - Legislation has been filed to require all new one and two-family homes to have an automatic fire extinguishing system. Below is the link for House Bill 6378 - AN ACT REQUIRING AN AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEM IN ALL ONE AND TWO-FAMILY HOMES.


Maine - The Maine Fire Chiefs Association (MFCA) is committed to providing the Legislature with solid information about its key legislative priorities. With that information and enhanced understanding of the issues, they hope that legislators can support their #1 initiative in 2011: Residential Sprinklers - The Maine Fire Chiefs’ Association will continue to work with the Legislature to Educate, Promote and Implement Residential Sprinklers. Residential Sprinklers have proven that they reduce the loss of life and property.

Maine - Representative Lance Harvell (R) of Farmington, ME has sponsored LD 43, An Act to Repeal the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code. Please review it carefully. This bill repeals the laws
establishing the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code and makes adjustments to certain other laws to make them consistent with law that existed prior to the enactment of Public Law 2007, chapter 699, which created the uniform code. This bill does not reenact the Maine Model Building Code or the energy efficiency building standards that were repealed by Public Law 2007, chapter 699 and replaced by the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code. We anticipate a lively process, and will need your support to insure that the State does not take a HUGE Step backwards.

Repealing the MUBEC brings along some consequences, the obvious one is the loss of all new townhouses being required to have fire sprinkler coverage.

**Maine** – Legislation has been filed recently titled - LD 123 – “**An Act to Assist Seasonal Entertainment Facilities with Public Safety Requirements,**” the title could be changed to “An Act to Eliminate Public Safety Requirements in Seasonal Entertainment Facilities.”

This bill which “ought not to pass” prohibits the requirement of sprinkler systems in commercial places of assembly that open for no more than 50 days per calendar year. Commercial places of assembly include bars with live entertainment, dance halls, nightclubs, assembly halls with festival seating and restaurants. Did they ever hear of the Station Nightclub Fire, 2/20/2003, 100 dead?

**Massachusetts** – Adoption of the 2009 IRC and the **ONE- AND TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLER requirement:** At its January 11, 2011 the BBRS voted to defer consideration of all three controversial code amendments (residential sprinklers stretch code, fire protection for floors and Article 9 inspections) to a future Public Hearing. The first vote was to put it off until the May Statutory Public Hearing and that was amended to a future Public Hearing, hopefully before May to keep the process moving. The vote was unanimous. The next meeting of the MA BBRS is scheduled for March 8, 2011.

**New Hampshire** –The NFSA and fire service proponents of residential sprinklers will be watching for legislation in 2011 from the Home Builders, otherwise the residential sprinkler local option moratorium on cities and towns will expire this year.

**Rhode Island** –No new items to report - On March 4, 2010 the Building Code Commission voted to adopt the 2009 IRC without the provision for residential sprinklers.


**Fire Sprinkler Saves!**

**RI Elderly High Rise Fire**

**CENTRAL FALLS, RI – 1/21/2011** – A fire in the apartment of a 92 year-old woman was extinguished by a single sprinkler head. According to Acting Chief Gerard R. Dion the fire occurred on the fifth floor inside an apartment and was confined to an ottoman and slight damage to kitchen cabinets.
Apparently the woman awoke to the sound of the local smoke detector in her apartment to find the ottoman on fire. She tried to extinguish it by bringing it to the kitchen sink but it flared up and set one sprinkler head off. The building is a 10 story residential high rise with 226 apartments.

**MA Dumpster Fire Causes Minimal Damage**

**FALL RIVER, MA — 01/28/2011** - A small Dumpster fire inside a North End business could have been a lot worse if not for the building’s sprinkler system, a fire official said. “The sprinkler system held everything in check ‘til we got in there,” District Chief Doug Sullivan said. The name of the company at 140 Ace St. was not immediately available, but Sullivan said it is a shopping cart refurbishing business. Because of the effectiveness of the sprinkler system, the fire was contained to smoke and water damage.

**VT Blaze Damages West Mountain Inn**

**ARLINGTON, VT – 1/28/2011** - An early morning fire broke out at the West Mountain Inn. Fortunately, the fire was contained and further damage avoided due to a functioning sprinkler system, according to innkeeper Amie Emmons. Emmons said that the fire started in the inn's first floor living room at approximately 2 AM. She said that the fire alarm tousled 14 guests from their sleep upstairs, while a first floor sprinkler system dampened the flames. "It was definitely very scary to see," Emmons said of the aftermath of the fire. "But everything worked as it should have." Arlington Fire Chief James Paustian did not consider the fire suspicious, but rather suspected a ceiling light was to blame.

**MA Senior High Rise Housing Complex Damaged**

**AMESBURY, MA – 1/30/2011** - About 20 Heritage Towers residents were driven from their homes yesterday around lunchtime following a small kitchen fire on the sixth floor of the 10-story complex. Amesbury fire Chief Jonathan Brickett said the sprinklers quickly knocked down the fire.

Amesbury Building Inspector Denis Nadeau said Heritage Towers has 102 units, two of which were damaged. It could be awhile before the residents of those two units are allowed to return home. All other residents were back in their homes.

**MA Shopping Plaza Fire**

**BROCKTON, MA – 2/4/2011** – According to Lt. Edward R. Williams Jr., Inspector/Investigator, Brockton Fire Department - Fire Prevention Bureau, at 0912 hours a central station alarm was received for the Sidelines Plaza at 225 East Ashland Street. A 911 call was received 2 minutes later reporting smoke in the building. On arrival and once access was gained a fire was located in a bathroom. The fire was in the ceiling area. The fire originated in a ceiling fan. The fire burned through the plywood deck of the attic, activating a head above the fan in the attic. The sprinkler knocked down the fire.

**MA Elderly High Rise Fire**

**WEYMOUTH, MA – 2/4/2011** – According to F/F Justin Myers, Fire Prevention Coordinator, Weymouth Fire Department, a fire occurred in an apartment on the 7th floor of an 11 story mixed residential - commercial building constructed in 1973. The apartments are for adults over the age of 62.
The single female occupant of the apartment had just left to go play bingo on the first floor. Prior to leaving her apartment the resident had been sitting in her recliner chair smoking cigarettes.

Firefighters on arrival the crew found the alarm panel indicating Sprinkler Flow, the crew of E-3 was dispatched to the 7th floor and discovered a light smoke condition. The crew entered the apartment with the fire and observed one sprinkler head flowing in the living room area. A search of the apartment revealed nobody home. The crew then extinguished the flames. This fire was caused by the careless use of smoking materials. There were no civilian or Firefighter injuries or loss of life.

**Sprinklers douse apartment fire in South Portland, ME**

**SOUTH PORTLAND, ME — 2/08/2011** - A sprinkler system knocked down a fire in a 12-unit apartment building, preventing widespread damage and displacement of tenants.

South Portland Deputy Fire Chief Miles Haskell said the electrical fire started in the bedroom of a third-floor apartment at 10 Burnham St., the residents were not home at the time, but a sprinkler system prevented the fire from spreading, Haskell said. There was only minor fire damage and water damage in the bedroom, he said. Other residents in the building were able to return that evening, Haskell said.

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**2011 NFSA Annual Seminar & Exhibition**

Registration materials for the 2011 NFSA Annual Seminar & Exhibition, to be held at The Hilton Baltimore in Baltimore, Maryland, April 7–9, are now available at [www.nfsa.org](http://www.nfsa.org). Simply click on the web banner at the top of the NFSA home page and you will be able to view the registration brochure in its entirety. Space is sure to fill up fast, so don’t wait for your brochure to arrive through the mail, download the brochure, fill out the registration forms and fax them in to us today. We’ve assembled conference programming and an exhibition to meet and surpass the industry’s highest possible expectations. Every detail has been planned with your interest in mind. With significantly reduced registration compared to previous exhibition years and a special “Contractor Management Team” fee, attendance at this year’s Annual Seminar & Exhibition will not only be informative, but easy on your bottom line. Be sure to check it out today!