

August 25, 2003

PUBLIC COMMENT

TO: NIST NCST Advisory Committee

FROM: John Biechman, Vice President Government Affairs
National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

- Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to speak before this Advisory Committee today. My name is John Biechman, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for NFPA.
- NFPA has worked with and supported NIST on both the World Trade Center and Rhode Island nightclub investigations. NFPA looks forward to the information and insight that will result from the investigations. Such information will result in greater public safety.
- As you may know recent amendments were issued by the NFPA Standards Council to NFPA's two key safety codes, NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code*®, and NFPA 5000™, *Building Construction and Safety Code*™.
- NFPA 101 –is used in every state and adopted statewide in 35 states – addresses minimum building design, construction, operation, and maintenance requirements necessary to protect building *occupants* from danger caused by fire, smoke, and toxic fumes.
- And, NFPA 5000 –which was recently chosen for adoption by the State of California – 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.
- Precipitated by the E2 nightclub crowd crush incident in Chicago and The Station nightclub fire in West Warwick, RI – both of which occurred in February and collectively resulted in 121 fatalities – the amendments institute requirements that are believed at this time to be among the nation's most stringent.

The new requirements call for the installation of fire sprinklers in all *new* nightclub-type facilities, and for the installation of fire sprinklers in all *existing* nightclubs with occupancies exceeding 100.

- Also issued were:
 - Restrictions to festival seating – also known as general admission seating – when occupancies exceed 250 (unless a life-safety evaluation is performed).
 - A requirement for crowd managers knowledgeable in public safety for all places of assembly.
 - And, requirements for regular egress inspection and record-keeping for existing nightclubs.

- The genesis of these amendments is traced back to discussions that originated at a public forum and special meeting of NFPA's Technical Committee on Assembly Occupancies, held on March 13 in Boston.

- The public forum preceded the technical committee meeting. Speakers included relatives of victims', fire marshals and fire chiefs from around the country, and members of several national fire and life safety organizations.

- After studying all recommendations over the last several months, the technical committee reached agreement on the above amendments and recommended to the NFPA Standards Council on July 25 that the amendments be issued to the 2003 editions of both codes.

- The Standards Council reviewed these results and issued the amendments on the 25th, making them effective 20 days following their decision.

- Clearly, these amendments demonstrate the NFPA codes and standards development system once again being responsive to these kinds of terrible tragedies.

- Thank you for the work that you are doing on these and other significant incidents, and thank you, once again, for the opportunity to update you on the work that NFPA and our technical committee members have undertaken as a result of these tragic incidents.