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The Wisconsin Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association supported a variety of legislative activities throughout 2009.

The Automatic Fire Sprinkler System Contractor and Journeyman Council (AFSSCJ) was formed earlier this year to address the following priorities with the Department of Commerce:

- Contractor Registration – inquiring about linking the contractor company with the contractor license holder; the AFSSCJ requests feedback from other contractors on the operations of the new system and their priorities.
- Administrative forfeiture – drafting legislation that would help ensure non-licensed sprinkler fitters are not installing these life-saving systems by allowing the Department of Commerce and other local authorities to issue a forfeiture.
- Fire sprinkler system tester license – the current exam to become a tester is not sufficient. The Department of Commerce is willing to consider alternative proposals to include additional training that would require a contractor license or employment by a contractor.
- Continuing efforts to advance administrative forfeiture legislation and build International Residential Code support, the AFSSCJ met with key legislators to request that they author legislation allowing the Department of Commerce to issue a fine or forfeiture to individuals and/or companies that are non-compliant with fire sprinkler licenses in Wisconsin. The AFSSCJ continues the process by addressing questions and finding additional support for this effort.

Moving forward into 2010, stemming from the establishment of the Wisconsin Fire Protection Conduit this year, as Legislative session begins the Fire Sprinkler Coalition will focus on the state imposing fines to ensure proper licensure. As one of the priorities identified by contractors and fitters alike, the coalition will focus efforts on enacting legislation that will allow the State Department of Commerce to issue an administrative forfeiture to individual workers and contracting companies that violate sprinkler licensing laws.

The State Moves Forward on Restructuring State Bidding Statutes

- The state of Wisconsin may expand the use of alternative bidding methods on state construction projects. The NFSA WI Chapter lobbyist Annie Early has worked to preserve a competitive and transparent bidding process. Currently a default system of multiple prime, pending legislation proposes a system that gives equal footing to multiple prime, single prime and construction manager. In conjunction with other mechanical trades, the industry is fighting to ensure each bidding method includes subcontractor protections and to specifically allow fire sprinkler contractors to consistently bid directly to the state or prime contractor.

In an attempt to garner support for the adoption of the International Residential Code, 2009 edition, and repealing the Uniform Dwelling Code that prevents local authorities from adopting single and two-family requirements, Dan Gengler and NFSA WI Chapter lobbyist Annie Early met with the League of Municipalities to discuss initiatives relating to single-family homes.

In addition, the WI Residential Fire Sprinkler Coalition (WRFSC) was formed made up of fire service members and contractors.

The vision of the coalition is dedicated to the people of WI, living now and in the future in one and two family dwellings; to protect those families from death or injuries, and protect their personal property from the devastating effects of fire.

The coalition's mission is to enhance and improve the life safety of all WI residents and firefighters through the installation and maintenance of residential fire sprinkler systems.

- To provide the people of WI with factual information and education; safety advantages and benefits of fire sprinkler systems and how it addresses current hazards and reduced evacuation times due to plastics, foams and lightweight construction in our homes.
- Partner with state and local governments, citizens, home builders, and construction industry stakeholders to use legislative channels to give communities the opportunity to adopt legislation requiring fire sprinklers in all one and two-family homes.

We've made progress in 2009 and much is to be done in 2010. With growing support of those that have been involved and many we know will jump on board, the goal for safer buildings in Wisconsin's future keeps getting a little closer.

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