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**Media Contact:**

Stevan Allen (916) 448-1336

[stevan@allenstrategic.com](mailto:stevan@allenstrategic.com)

## **California Sprinkler Fitters Association Urges Local Governments to Uphold Fire Sprinkler Ordinances to Save Lives**

### ***Industry Group Voices Concern that Short Cuts Endanger Public Safety***

**SACRAMENTO, Calif. (May 28, 2009)** – With a poor economy and dwindling public resources, it is more important than ever for local governments across the state to remain vigilant in upholding fire safety laws, the Sprinkler Fitters Association of California (SFAC) announced today.

The industry group voiced its concerns in response to worsening budgets and a recent Long Beach City Council ordinance that exempts older residential high rises and large apartment complexes from a mandate to install fire sprinkler systems. Instead, Long Beach adopted an alternative plan requiring an evacuation and fire safety plan, additional smoke alarms and emergency lighting.

While important, those measures don't address the fundamental problem of putting out fires, said Randy Roxson, SFAC's executive director.

"Taking short cuts around sprinkler systems is irresponsible in this day and age – after firefighters themselves, sprinklers are the next best way to combat fires and save lives," Roxson said. "Dismissing fire sprinkler systems is like ignoring an obvious safety measure like wearing seatbelts while driving."

To underscore the critical importance of fire sprinklers, Roxson cited the following information from the federal government's United States Fire Administration:

- Sprinklers provide a high level of life safety. Statistics demonstrate that there has never been any multiple loss of life in a fully sprinklered building
- Property losses are 85 percent less in residences with fire sprinklers compared to those without sprinklers.
- The combination of automatic sprinklers and early warning systems can reduce overall injuries, death and property damage by at least 50 percent.

- There are more fires in older buildings because older buildings comprise a larger portion of the country's structural inventory.
- There are more deaths and injuries in older dwellings because demographically identifiable groups more susceptible to fire, such as the elderly and people of low socioeconomic status, tend to live in older homes.
- Smoke alarms save lives by providing a warning system but can do nothing to extinguish a growing fire or protect those physically unable to escape on their own, such as the elderly or small children.
- As the percent of homes in America that were "protected" with smoke alarms increased from zero to more than 70 percent, the number of fire deaths in homes did not significantly decrease.
- Fire sprinkler systems do not cause taxes to go up when local government practices fiscal diligence. In fact, fire protection costs may go down, especially in communities that can maximize all the benefits afforded by using fire sprinkler protection.
- Reductions in water service sizes, hydrant spacing, fire service costs, and damage repair can be reduced.
- Some progressive local governments offer tax incentives to encourage homeowners to install fire sprinkler systems in their dwellings.
- For new buildings, a sprinkler system costs one to two percent of the total construction costs.

"We know times are tough, but that is no excuse for cities to ignore public safety and put lives at risk," said Roxson, who said his group is issuing the reminder to help prevent similar decisions from being made elsewhere in California. "We need to nip this in the bud to stop other municipalities from making mistakes."

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**About:** The Sprinkler Fitters Association of California (SFAC) is a non-profit association representing members of Sprinkler Fitters Local Unions throughout California. The organization strongly supports and advocates for the adoption of local ordinances, regulations, and state laws that require fire sprinklers, and that require only qualified sprinkler fitters to install these life safety systems. The Sprinkler Fitters are part of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipe Fitting, and Sprinkler Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA). The SFAC's mission is three-fold; the promotion of fire sprinklers, fire sprinkler training, and promoting the use of qualified sprinkler fitters to install fire extinguishing life safety systems. Statistics have proven that properly installed fire sprinklers saves lives.