

SCHULTE & ASSOCIATES

Building Code Consultants
880D Forest Avenue
Evanston, IL 60202
fpeschulte@aol.com
847/866-7479

HIGH RISE BUILDINGS: ADDITIONAL FIRE SAFETY STATISTICS

By Richard Schulte

The fire safety record of high rise buildings is (once again) being questioned-this time by consultants working for the Alliance for Fire and Smoke Containment and Control (AFSCC), a trade organization representing the manufacturers of passive fire protection products.

The following are statistics collected and published by the National Fire Protection Association on the fire record of high rise buildings in the United States.

ANNUAL AVERAGE FIRE FATALITIES U. S. HIGH RISE BUILDINGS				
	OFFICE BLDG.	HOTELS	APARTMENT BLDG.	TOTAL
1985-1998	< 1	3	51	54
2003-2006	0	2	26	28

Source: *High Rise Building Fires*, John R. Hall, Jr., National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), June 2009.

The statistics above show a reduction of one-third in the average number of fire fatalities occurring in high rise hotels in the 4 year period from 2003-2006, when compared with the 14 year period from 1984 to 1998-the average number of fire fatalities went from 3 to 2. Given the low number of fire fatalities occurring in high rise hotels, this reduction in fire fatalities in high rise hotels is probably not a statistically significant change.

The statistics above also show a reduction of just under 50 percent (48.1 percent) in the average number of fire fatalities occurring in high rise apartment buildings in the 4 year period from 2003-2006 when compared with the 14 year period from 1984 to 1998-the average number of fire fatalities went from 54 to 28.

The near 50 percent reduction in the number of fire fatalities occurring in high rise apartment buildings no doubt reflects the impact of retro-fitting many existing high rise apartment buildings with sprinkler protection.

It can be expected that the reduction in the number of fire fatalities which occur in high rise apartment buildings will continue to decrease as the stock of unsprinklered high rise apartment buildings in the U.S. continues to diminish.

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