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FIRE FATALITIES: U. S. HIGH RISE BUILDINGS

By Richard Schulte

How safe are high rise buildings from fire in the United States? The following are statistics on the fire safety record of high rise buildings in the 14 year period from 1985 through 1998.

U.S. HIGH RISE BUILDING FIRE FATALITIES				
	Office Bldg.	Hotels	Apartment Bldg.	Total
1985	1	0	54	55
1986	1	0	32	33
1987	2	5	46	53
1988	0	8	83	91
1989	0	5	97	102
1990	0	7	76	83
1991	0	0	23	23
1992	1	0	31	32
1993	0	0	43	43
1994	0	0	51	51
1995	0	0	53	53
1996	0	8	56	64
1997	0	6	27	33
1998	0	0	35	35
Total:	5	39	707	751
Annual Average:	< 1	3	51	54

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

It is important to note that the statistics cited above include non-sprinklered buildings, partially sprinklered buildings and buildings protected throughout by a sprinkler system.

The installation of sprinkler protection in high rise apartment buildings should bring the number of fire fatalities in these types of high rise buildings in line with the number of fire fatalities occurring in high rise hotel buildings.

Given the statistics above, it seems reasonable to conclude that the number of fire fatalities which occur in U. S. high rise residential and office buildings protected throughout by a sprinkler system is near zero. In other words, the installation of sprinkler protection in U.S. high rise buildings practically eliminates fire fatalities in these types of buildings.

This, of course, should come as no surprise. Studies of fires in low-rise buildings in the United States, such as the Scottsdale Report, also indicate that the installation of sprinkler protection practically eliminates fire fatalities.

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