

**Pat Quinn, Governor**



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## ***Office of the State Fire Marshal***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, January 27, 2014

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## **THE OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL REMINDS BUILDING OWNERS OF COLD WEATHER ALERT FOR SPRINKLER SYSTEMS**

### ***Keep Pipes Warm to Maintain Sprinkler Systems***

CHICAGO – As the weather again rushes below zero, the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) wishes to remind building owners that it is important to take steps to prevent freeze-ups of water-based fire protection systems, such as automatic fire sprinkler systems.

While designers and installers of sprinkler systems take into account the variety of seasonal temperatures during installation, normal precautions should be taken to keep both the building and the fire sprinkler system warm. Like with all water-containing pipes, freezing temperatures can cause pipes to break or leak, resulting in problems during operation in the event of a fire. As we have seen, freezing temperatures outside also make it more difficult to utilize external sources for fire suppression, increasing the importance of the building's internal systems.

The National Fire Protection Association's standard for the installation of sprinkler systems requires that the owner of the property maintain at least a 40 degree temperature in ALL areas containing water-filled piping. To avoid any loss of function of fire suppression systems in your building, consider the following recommendations:

- Make sure heating systems are in good working order and that the thermostat is set high enough to prevent freezing temperatures in all areas of the building. Manually override any energy-saving measures on digital thermostats and other devices that allow the area temperature to drop below freezing.
- Openings to the outdoors should be tightly sealed. If cold drafts are noticed, locate the source and take steps to remedy them. Remove snow and ice from doors and windows that don't close completely, so that they can be sealed more tightly. Cracks around other openings should be sealed or caulked to keep warm air from dissipating.
- Doors leading to poorly heated vestibules may need to be left open at night to allow heat into that area.
- In buildings with drop-ceilings, removing a few tiles in each room will allow heat to travel into otherwise cold areas containing pipes.

Freeze-ups are not failures of the fire sprinkler system. Water in sprinkler piping, like any piping that holds water, will freeze when subjected to colder temperatures. Sprinkler piping should be kept at temperatures above freezing to ensure that they continue to operate correctly and to avoid potentially tragic and costly consequences that can be avoided by taking these simple precautions.

For further information on keeping your sprinkler system winter-ready, contact your qualified fire sprinkler contractor, who provides routine inspection, testing, and maintenance on your system. Their contact information should be located near the main control valves of your system.