

**Now
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have the
fire in
hand ...**

**How
Do You
Control
the
Smoke?**



Advocating a Balanced Approach to Protecting People & Property

WHERE THERE'S FIRE, THERE'S SMOKE.

6775 SW 111th Ave., Ste. 10
Beaverton, OR 97008



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Now that you have the fire in hand ... How Do You Control the Smoke?

Owner's, architects, and tenants depend upon the model building codes to provide for the protection of both people and property. Fire safety is one of the key sections of the code protecting building occupants every day.

Automatic sprinkler systems are one of the most effective fire safety tools for controlling and suppressing fire. Sprinklers have supported the efforts of firefighters across the country, and statistics show that they are currently the most effective tool for controlling the spread of fire.

Smoke—the Other Hazard. There's only one problem. Fire isn't the only hazard – the smoke generated by the fire can be much more dangerous. In a video entitled "Get Out Alive" the Hartford Insurance Company states that *"three quarters of all who die in fires are victims of smoke and gases"*. Fire officials agree. In a recent television segment of NBC's "Dateline", a 22-year veteran of the Police and Fire Academy in Bergen County, New Jersey stated that *"80% of the people that die every year in fires, die from smoke inhalation"*. Sprinklers certainly help to contain the fire, but they cannot contain the smoke generated by the fire. Consequently, building tenants can be jeopardized by smoke traveling far from the fire's origin.

IBC Fire Safety Code Provisions—Are they Safe Enough? The new International Building Code establishes new minimum standards for fire protection and includes tradeoffs if the building is sprinklered. These tradeoffs allow the elimination of many passive measures designed to control smoke migration beyond the fire floor. Without these passive measures, sprinklered buildings will depend primarily upon automatic sprinkler systems alone to provide protection for building occupants. The minimum standards for fire and smoke protection in the IBC discard the balanced system approaches developed through decades of model building code evolution.

What You Can Do. The Smoke Safety Council would appreciate any comments you might have on this critical issue. More importantly, if you believe that smoke is a hazard, even in sprinklered buildings, or if you are not sure, you should consider the following actions:

- **Raise the question, "is vertical smoke migration a hazard in multistory buildings?"** at your next chapter meeting. Find out what your peers think—this is an important life safety question.
- **Contact your IBC Fire Safety, Means of Egress, and Occupancy Subcommittee** members to find out where they stand on this question. These committees meet in Birmingham, Alabama in April 2000 to consider changes to the IBC 2000 code.
- **Discuss this question with the fire officials you know.** Gain the benefit of their firefighting experience in actual firefighting to see if they consider smoke a hazard in multistory building, including sprinklered fires.

For further information, or to provide your feedback on this issue, contact us via our website at www.smokesafety.org. Remember, these meetings will result in the building code that you will interpret and implement.



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