

Speak Out:

**Don't obscure the
hazards of smoke.**



Advocating a Balanced Approach to Protecting People & Property

WHERE THERE'S FIRE, THERE'S SMOKE.



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We would all like to save money on the airline tickets we buy, especially if you're a frequent traveler. How would you respond to the following opportunity?

Imagine that one of the major airlines announces that effective October 1, 2000, they will reduce ticket prices by 10-25% for all flights – no matter when they are booked. The reason for reduced ticket prices? The airline has revamped all of their aircraft, removing redundant safety devices that add weight and take up valuable space. This allows the planes to carry more fuel, fly farther per gallon of fuel, and generally operate more efficiently. The savings realized by removing these devices are being passed on to the flying customers in an effort to curb the high cost of air travel.

The airline goes on to explain that because of the incredible safety record enjoyed by the modern airline fleet, it was decided that operating systems are so well engineered that there is no longer any need for backup systems to the aircraft controls. These systems add extra weight and maintenance cost,

and are considered redundant. Statistical studies show that there have never been any documented airline crashes or multiple fatalities where the primary aircraft control systems were installed, maintained, and operated properly.

Ready to take advantage of the savings? Or are you somewhat reluctant to entrust your personal safety to an airline you consider may be taking liberties with the margin of safety you've come to expect from U.S. airline companies? Even though statistics clearly show that airline travel is the safest mode of transport, most of us would be unwilling to trade off the safety provided by the "redundant" control systems designed in today's airliners.

As the International Building Code continues to evolve, one of the areas of concern continues to center on defining the level of protection for building occupants in different occupancies. There is a growing recognition that the hazards presented by migrating smoke need to be addressed in the context of construction trade-offs that are being incorporated to provide financial incentives for installing automatic suppression systems.

The need for a balanced design approach, considering the hazards presented in different occupancies, is making sense to more building officials. Research shows that a building incorporating an integrated fire and smoke protection plan, using a balanced design approach, provides the most effective protection for building occupants.

As you discuss the new International Building Code, keep in mind that this document will define the **minimum requirements** for many buildings to be built. Owners will typically do no more than what is minimally required by the building code. People have come to expect the building code to provide a reasonable level of protection. Don't compromise those expectations by weakening the fire safety provisions with excessive protective measure trade-offs. A balanced design approach to fire safety makes the most sense for all of us.

What do you think? Visit our web site (www.smokesafety.org) and let us know. We have a bulletin board to post your questions and opinions, as well as information on the hazards presented by migrating smoke. We would appreciate the opportunity to hear from you.



¹ Fleming, Russell P. Technically Speaking: Sprinkler Performance at the Millennium, *Sprinkler Quarterly*, Fall 1999, pp. 30-31.

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