



Westmont Fire Department

Fire Chief Dave Weiss

Fire Prevention Bureau Director Larry Kaufman

February 14, 2013

*Recommendations to the Board Regarding
the installation requirements of Fire and
Life Safety Systems and How they Relate to
the Westmont Code of Ordinances*

Life Safety Systems in Question

Automatic Fire Alarm System

- due by June 2013, adopted 4 years ago.
- Includes detection devices, notification devices, pull stations and monitors sprinkler system (if it exists).

Wireless monitoring of all fire alarm systems directly to Westmont Dispatch Center.

- due by June 2013, adopted 4 years ago.
- All fire alarms are required to be monitored. Wireless monitoring, directly to Westmont dispatch, is the most efficient and cost effective method currently available.

Sprinkler moratorium, Downtown District

- expires June 2013
- Automatic sprinkler systems suppress fires before they get large. A majority of fires are controlled with 3 or less sprinkler heads activating.

Fire Facts

- Fire grows fast. Once a fire in a building starts, it needs to be detected and extinguished quickly.
- Fires in non-residential properties do occur. In fact, everyday. These fires have immediate and lasting impact on individuals and communities.
- Beside the obvious impacts a fire has on a community, there are additional lasting negative effects.

How fast does a fire grow?

- Fires spread fast and causes a lot of lasting damage. Damage is both from the fire itself and suppression of that fire. Avoiding and preventing fires is always the best practice.
- Slow developing fires – double in size every 120 seconds
- **Medium developing fires – double in size every 60 seconds**
- Fast developing fires – double in size every 30 seconds
- Ultra-fast developing fires – double in size every 15 seconds
- What does this mean? In a “medium developing fire”, rooms can become untenable within minutes. Being notified quickly is a key element to surviving a fire and minimizing property damage.
- “Every second counts”, the faster a fire is detected and reported, the better chance there is to limit loss of life and property.

Fire Statistics, non-residential

myth: fires only occur in residential structures

- National estimates for nonresidential building fires in 2010, the most recent year data are available, are:
 - ■ **Fires: 84,900** (this does not include residential structures)
 - ■ **Deaths: 80**
 - ■ **Injuries: 1,375**
 - ■ **Dollar Loss: \$2,400,700,000**
 - **1/3 of these fires are unintentionally set.**
- Source FEMA

Fires have a lasting a impact on communities

- In addition to the obvious property loss and potential loss of life.
- **Economic impact** found in higher insurance premiums and lost jobs. Insurance rarely covers all lost property. Business is closed, sometimes for extended periods; this results in lost revenues which correlates to lost sales and property taxes. 70% of business that have interrupted operations, never re-open.
- **Legal Impact:** In today's legal environment, any type of incident can generate civil litigation. A tenant may bring litigation against a building owner for monetary losses, injury, or death. The building owner may pursue litigation if the tenant was in some way responsible for the cause or spread of the fire. An owner may bring litigation against the fire department itself if he/she believes that the department failed to take proper and appropriate actions in firefighting and in fire prevention. Regardless of the underlying reason, litigation results in substantial financial costs. While the fire may be over in a matter of hours, the subsequent litigation may continue for years.

Fires have a lasting impact on communities

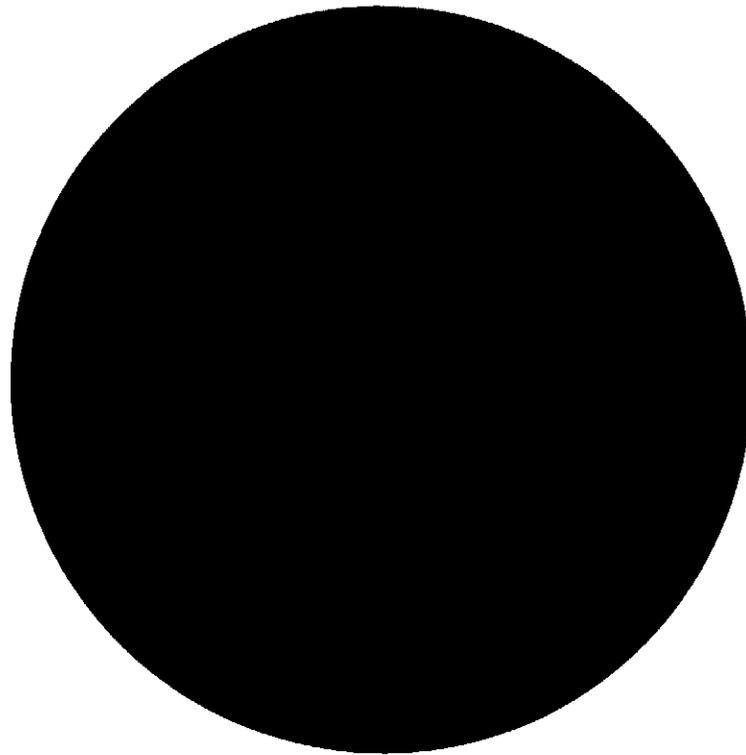
- **Psychological Impact:** Nearly every fire has psychological effects on those burned, family and friends of those injured or killed, property owners, tenants, fire department members, and the community-at-large. In some instances buildings are demolished and/or never used again after a fire.
- **Political Impact:** A fire loss can have political effects through loss of jobs, reduction in the tax base, loss of housing units, increases in insurance ratings/costs, and abandoned buildings. These conditions also can result in a deterioration of areas or neighborhoods, which in turn provides a breeding ground for additional fire losses.

Fire Alarm Systems

- Quickly detect fires. Proven technology, with proven results.
- Allow for early response which is essential for saving lives and property.
- **Cost approximately \$1.00 - \$2.50 per square foot.**
- 95% of Westmont properties, which are required to have fire alarms, are already protected.
- Requiring the installation of FAS has been an on-going goal of the Westmont FD for many years. Requiring these fire alarm systems aligns with one of the Primary Objectives of the Westmont FD
 - **Prevent Fires, Protect Life and Property.**

80 buildings of 654 lack compliant FAS

Properties Requiring FAS by June 2014
12 % not compliant



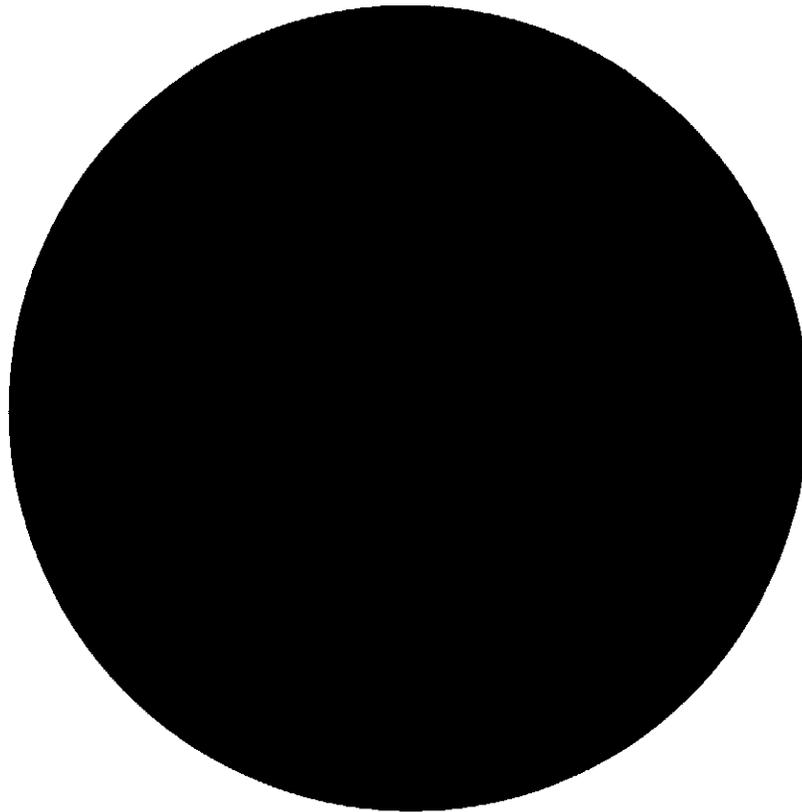
■ properties
requiring FAS

■ properties
needing FAS

39 buildings in Downtown District (B-1) lack FAS

39 or 80 total lacking FAS

Properties in Downtown District without FAS



■ Total properties w/o FAS

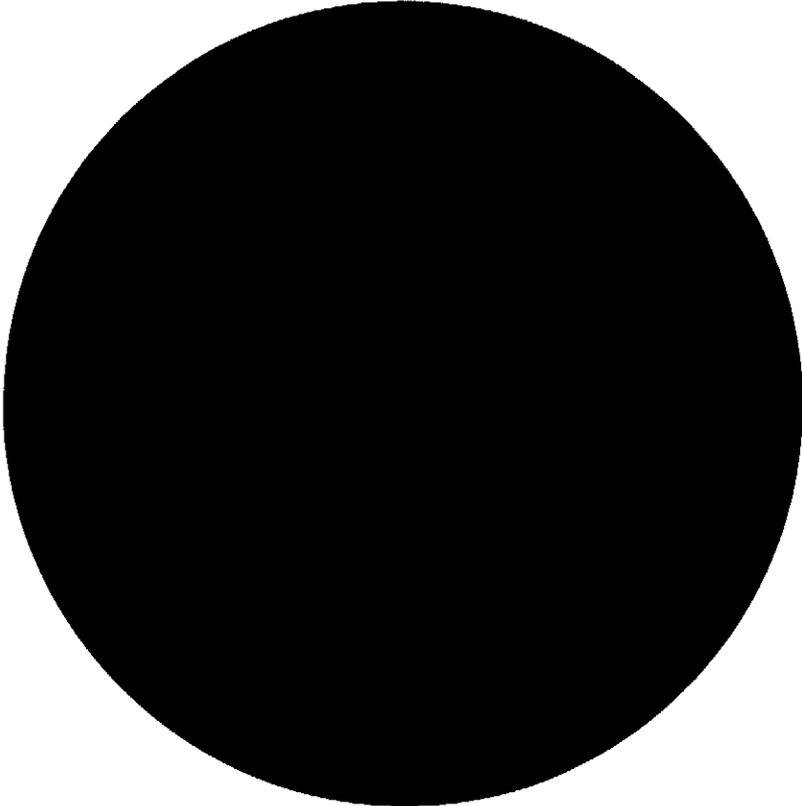
■ Downtown properties w/o FAS

Wireless Monitoring of Fire Alarms

- In the past, the most significant problem with monitored fire alarms was the false alarms caused by phone lines the fire alarm signal was transmitted by.
- Wireless monitoring of fire alarms, directly to the Westmont Dispatch Center, has solved this issue and offers other benefits:
 - Faster response, signal is sent directly to dispatch. As opposed to a central station which then needs to call Westmont Dispatch (This can add minutes to the dispatch process).
 - Compared to “phone line monitoring”, wireless is less expensive to the end user. This is accomplished by the elimination of the dedicated phone line required in the past. Currently \$55/month to monitor a fire alarm.
 - Problems with fire alarms can be identified immediately. Owners can be immediately notified and if unreachable, FD will respond. Properties are rarely left unprotected.

654 FAS protected properties, 441 are monitored
directly to Westmont Dispatch
67% compliance

Properties needing conversion to wireless



■ Buildings with FAS

■ Buildings needing conversion

Sprinkler System Moratorium

- Current moratorium on sprinkler requirement is set to expire June 2013. The moratorium applies to the Westmont Downtown District only. This moratorium was proposed in an effort to provoke businesses into the Downtown District.
- Sprinkler systems are proven life and property savers. Loss of life in a building protected by sprinklers is unheard of. Protecting an area like the Downtown District against fire is best accomplished through automatic sprinkler systems.
- According to the NFPA, at least 2/3 of all reported structure fires occur in non-sprinkled buildings.

Sprinkler System Moratorium (cont.)

- The current moratorium has “exceptions” that still require some occupancies to be sprinkled. The sprinkler requirement must be “triggered” to pertain. Existing, operating businesses are **not** retro-actively required to install sprinkler systems

Sprinkler System Moratorium (cont.)

- Existing exceptions; (these would be required to install sprinkler systems)
 - Any new building over 2500 sq. ft. in size
 - Restaurant or assembly use with occupant loads over 50
 - Only applicable if “triggered” by construction or a new building.
 - Any additions which increase building size to over 2500 sq. ft.
 - Any new duplex with dwelling units attached.
 - “Triggered” for existing by construction.
 - Any new multi-family dwelling with 3 or more units.
 - “Triggered” for existing by construction
 - Proposed - Mixed use occupancies (store and residential)
 - “triggered” upon construction or new building

What types of construction would “trigger” sprinkler requirement

- Removal, adding and/or relocating interior walls.
- Removal or relocation of door or window openings.
- Substantial changes to plumbing or electrical systems. Upgrading service – does not trigger.
- **Redecorating such as painting and new carpet/flooring does not trigger.**

Recommendations to the Board

- Keep current fire alarm ordinance intact
 - Compliance by June 2013, the goal is to have 100% of all Westmont businesses, multi-family, or mixed properties protected by fire alarms and/or sprinklers.
 - Pursue compliance through normal FPB protocols.
- Keep wireless monitoring ordinance intact
 - Compliance by June 2013
 - Pursue compliance through normal FPB protocols.
- Extend sprinkler moratorium in downtown district another 36 months.
 - Recommendation of extension is only feasible if all properties in Downtown District install compliant fire alarms by June 2013 deadline.
 - Keep exceptions to the moratorium intact and add mixed use provision.

He who fails to plan, is planning to fail.

- Winston Churchill

- QUESTIONS????
- Larry Kaufman
- 630-981-6428
- lkaufman@westmont.il.gov