



FCIA Mourns Oakland Warehouse Fire

The Firestop Contractors International Association (FCIA) membership's hearts go out to the victims of the Oakland, CA warehouse fire.

What is the solution to such a tragedy? While some may assert that sprinklers should be mandated in all buildings, there is more to building fire-safety than simply an installed sprinkler system.

Alarms & Detection - The alarm system notifies occupants of a fire through smoke and fire alarms.

Egress Systems - Adequate exit pathways and emergency exits must be in place, and the complete egress system needs to work. It also needs to be well-known by the occupants. Why? When fire and smoke strike, there is not time – or possibly visibility – to find one's way out. Thus, the exit route must be known in advance.

Sprinklers - Sprinkler systems in buildings may be able to control the fire until the fire department arrives to put it out.

Compartmentation and Structural Fire-Resistance - Buildings that use fire-resistance-rated construction and assemblies designed to resist the spread of smoke allow for safe egress for building occupants. These systems also confine the fire to the room where it started. Several recent studies have even shown how keeping non-fire-rated doors closed in homes can help save lives.

Education - Why isn't there a class in grades 6-8, 9-12 that teaches people what safety elements to look for in a building they are going to rent, buy or just occupy? Whether it is a restaurant, night club, hotel, school, dorm or other, people should ask upfront about the emergency procedures for if an accident takes place. And, do staff at restaurants, apartments or office buildings receive training on how to keep egress systems clear? They don't need to be architects, but they must be aware of what happens when buildings – and when things are stored in buildings – either are used incorrectly or put in the wrong place.

Safety in buildings is something that needs to be taken seriously by all. Let's make some changes now. The key elements to a safe building suggested above could save your life someday.