



PREVENTING MAJOR FIRES *Program Overview*

INTRODUCTION

It is rare for more than three persons to die in a fire, largely because most deadly fires occur in the home. But periodically, America suffers a truly major fire – often in places of public assembly – and when they occur, scores die. The deadliest structural fires were predictable and preventable. From the Our Lady of Angels elementary school to the Beverly Hills Supper Club and MGM Grand, hundreds of lives could have been saved by following well-understood rules.

The National Association of Fire Marshals' (NASFM) highest priority is protecting human life. Most of the Association's initiatives are directed at preventing the most dangerous of residential fires. However, NASFM believes that the scenario for the next major fire in a public place is reasonably predictable and preventable. The Association is especially concerned about large retail stores containing significant quantities of easily combustible fuel, with multiple ignition sources, inadequate exiting, and insufficient sprinkler systems, located on congested thoroughfares likely to hamper fire and rescue workers.

In 1999, NASFM will seek to work with those industries presenting this level of hazard, insurers, local code authorities and the news media to identify and prevent the next major fire. NASFM's initial focus will be large, discount hardware-garden-paint retailers and furniture retail stores.

PROGRAM

NASFM believes that the most cost-effective approach to safety is through the voluntary efforts of sincere, safety-conscious industries. In keeping with that belief, NASFM will:

- ✍ Consult Factory Mutual Research and NASFM's Science Advisory Committee to obtain technical insights into the nature and extent of the hazards presented by these public occupancies.
- ✍ Alert major retailers and insurance companies of NASFM's concerns.
- ✍ Work with the International Association of Fire Fighters to assess the fire fighter safety aspects of these hazards.
- ✍ Advise local code enforcement authorities to work with local retailers to correct deficiencies, voluntarily enforce occupancy limits and engage in standard pre-incident planning.
- ✍ Educate the public about conditions they should be wary of and/or avoid.