

OFFICE of the STATE FIRE MARSHAL

March 2011 Report

OSFM Monthly Report

- Message from
Tonya L. Hoover
- Code Development and
Analysis Division
- Pipeline Safety Division



*Acting State Fire Marshal
Tonya L. Hoover*

March Message from the Chief:

“Where does the time go?” we continually ask ourselves as we attempt to use and squeeze every waking hour to get the most out of each day. Time passes quickly when we are caught up in the day-to-day tasks, and we sometimes need to be reminded to reflect on events of the past and how those past events have brought us to the present in order to shape the future.

It was March 25, 1911 when a fire broke out on the eighth floor of a high-rise building in Greenwich Village, New York City. The building’s namesake, Joseph P. Asch, defined his 10 story building as “fire-proof” and claimed his building complied with all the city’s codes, a claim that would later be challenged. The infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire started in a trash container which was located near the freight elevator. The 500 workers used that elevator to leave at the end of their shift and make the trip down nine floors and out to their families and friends. At approximately 4:40 p.m., smoke, and then fire, was noticed in the trash container of scraps of sewing materials and other highly flammable materials. Some employees tried to extinguish the growing fire by running to get buckets of water. By the time they returned with the water the fire had grown from throwing embers and ash to other areas of the floor, spreading the fire and engulfing the entire area full of hot gases and thick smoke. The panicked employees jammed the two available exits only to find that, once there, the exit was locked for security to reduce theft in the building. When unlocked, the door opened into the room which made it difficult to open as people were up against the door attempting to exit. On the eighth floor, people struggled to get to other exits, which included the freight elevator. Attempts were made to alert persons on the ninth and tenth floors of how quickly the fire was spreading and cutting off safe exits. The fire department arrived a little over five minutes after the fire was reported but the intensity of the growing fire, the height of the building, and the location of the trapped people made the fire fight and rescue extremely difficult. Those trapped above the fire floor had no way out nor could the fire department rescue them quickly. As intense fire and smoke filled the upper floors, and about 10 minutes after the fire began, trapped workers started to jump out of windows to the ground below. According to reports, the panic lasted for about 15 minutes after the fire was reported as the last person fell from the building. Many were trapped in the failed elevator and died, others died using the exterior exit when it collapsed, and others died unable to exit through a locked exit door. The fire’s death toll was 146 people; 140 of those worked on the ninth floor; 129 were women and girls. The youngest was 14. 2009 National statistics tell us there were 3,010 civilian fire deaths (one civilian death



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occurred every two hours and 55 minutes), 17,050 civilian injuries, and 12.5 billion dollars in property damage. The statistics also tell a story of reported fires declining in 2009, down 7 percent from 2008. In California, however, we have seen an increase. In California alone, in 2010 there were 52,262 fires and total loss of structures and contents, up from 2009, of \$601,824,141 dollars. The tragedy of these include 153 firefighter injuries, 1 firefighter death, 361 civilian injuries, and 104 civilian fire deaths. These numbers have increased from 2009. Those 105 deaths are almost 29 percent of the national fire deaths of 2009. Time goes on and so does the fire problem. One hundred years later, the State of California has seen its share of fire. The twenty-five highest costs in the United State's fires range from single building or structure to wildland fires impacting entire communities. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), seven of the twenty-five most costly United States fires were in California. In those seven fires, entire communities were lost, business and recovery stifled, and, more importantly, people were injured and lives were lost.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire brought about landmark changes to workplace fire safety and in the 100 years since much has been done and more will, and can, be done to mitigate preventable fires and save lives. We have developed standards, regulations, and codes that exist to assist in protecting our community's infrastructure, citizens and emergency responders. These same standards provide support to their business continuity plans and plan implementation. Even as we reflect and remember those moments that brought us to where we are today, we know the cost of fire (life and dollar losses) may continue to increase and have a major impact on the future of California. Our decision on mitigation and enforcement will impact the future of our citizens, businesses, and communities and are essential to our communities' future survival and prosperity.

Ms. Frances Perkins saw the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, witnessing the devastation and deaths. In 1933, she was appointed Secretary of Labor by President Roosevelt (becoming the first woman Cabinet Secretary in the United States). During a 1913 NFPA meeting, Ms. Perkins spoke eloquently, stating, "We must work together with this idea in mind, that it is human life and happiness which we are trying to save, and that this is the most important thing, the most valuable social and spiritual asset in any community." That statement is as true today as it was almost 100 years ago as we continue today to keep our communities safe for tomorrow.

Be safe!



Tonya L. Hoover
Acting State Fire Marshal

(Note: Historical information concerning the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 condensed from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Journal – March/April Issue)



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Code Development and Analysis Division

The Code Development and Analysis Division has submitted rulemaking packages to the California Building Standards Commission for the Supplement to California Code of Regulations, Title 24, 2010 California Building Standards Codes. The SFM is proposing building standards and amendments to several Parts of the 2010 California Building Standards Codes as follows:

- Part 2, 2010 California Building Code
- Part 2.5, 2010 California Building Code
- Part 9, 2010 California Building Code
- Part 3, 2010 California Electrical Code

The California Building Standards Commission has scheduled the following Code Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings to hear the SFM and other State agency rulemaking packages:

- March 16, 2011 Accessibility Committee (ACCESS)
- March 24, 2011 ADHOC Committee [Building Fire and Other (BFO),
Structural Design - Lateral Forces (SD-LF),
Health Facilities (HF), Plumbing, Electrical,
Mechanical and Energy (PEME)]
- April 5, 2011 Green Building Standards Committee (GB)

Following the CAC meetings, the rulemaking packages will begin a 45-day public comment period (April/May).

For updates, please visit our website at:

http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/codedevelopment/codedevelopment_2010interimcodeadoption.php or visit the California Building Standards Commission website for complete details and additional information regarding the 2010 interim rule-making cycle for the 2010 California Codes at:

http://www.bsc.ca.gov/prpsd_chngs/pc_10_annual_cycle.htm



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Geographic Information System (GIS)

What is GIS? The GIS is a system of computer hardware, software and people that store, retrieve, input, output and analyze spatial data. GIS allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps.

GIS takes the numbers and words from the rows and columns in databases and spreadsheets and puts them on a map. In the CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal Pipeline Safety Division, this data is represented by lines displaying the Hazardous Liquid Pipelines (crude oil, gasoline, jet fuel, and diesel) for the State of California. GIS allows us to see where the pipeline actually exists in the ground and provides us with specific information about the pipeline such as length, diameter, operator, or inspection history. Each visual feature is connected to a record in the database and vice versa, which allows for both spatial and data query and analysis.

The Pipeline Safety Division Mapping System was created in 1995 with the intent to map all State Fire Marshal jurisdictional pipelines within California. Our State system reflects the National Pipeline Mapping System Repository standards with a few deviations. We require both age and diameter information for the pipeline and our positional accuracy is +/-100 feet rather than the national accuracy of +/-500 feet.

Today GIS is widely used to effectively solve problems and improve processes. When you drive down the road, chances are GIS managed the signs and streets along the way and if you looked at a map on the Internet, GIS had a hand in that too. Whether you use GIS technology yourself or see its impacts indirectly, it is a technology at work today to make our world better and safer.



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