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LOG OF MEETING

DIRECTORATE FOR ENGINEERING SCIENCES

SUBJECT: Maryland State Fire Marshal Meeting

DATE OF MEETING: February 14, 1995

PLACE: Commerce Electrical Supply Building, Linthicum, MD

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Robert L. Northedge

DATE OF ENTRY: February 16, 1995

COMMISSION ATTENDEES: Robert Northedge

NON COMMISSION ATTENDEES:

Charles Cronauer, Deputy Chief Maryland State Fire Marshal  
Charles Cook, Housing and Community Development, State of Maryland Codes Department  
Robert Johnson, Secretary, Maryland Electrical Inspectors Association  
Gilbert Thompson, Chairman, Electric League of Maryland Legislative Committee and member of the Maryland Electrical Inspectors Association

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

The participants began the meeting with a discussion of the content of NFPA 73, Residential Electrical Maintenance Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings, which was issued January 1994 by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and approved by the American National Standards Institute. The code is offered for use in law and for regulating purposes in the interest of life and property protection.

Mr. Northedge explained the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) project on Home Electrical Systems Fires. The project's main goal is to reduce electrical fires in homes by providing sufficient technical information to state jurisdictions so that local authorities can seek adoption of the NFPA 73 inspection code.

Mr. Northedge presented the background of the origin of NFPA 73. As result of fire investigation studies sponsored by CPSC and published in a 1987 CPSC report, Residential Electrical Distribution Fires, NFPA initiated development of the inspection code, NFPA 73. The report demonstrated the need to inspect and correct residential wiring hazards in existing homes in order to reduce deaths and injuries from electrical fires.

The 1987 report contained estimates of residential wiring fires and resulting deaths and injuries. About 50,400 residential wiring fires occurred annually from 1983 to 1987 and they



resulted in approximately 440 deaths, 1400 injuries, and 500 million in property loss annually.

Between 1988 and 1992 the annual average number of home wiring fires is 42,800 and the annual average deaths is 350. In comparison to the 1983 to 1987 annual average, there is little significant change.

The report indicated that the age of the dwelling appeared to contribute to the likelihood that it would experience a fire. The rate of electrical wiring fires in dwellings over 40 years old was determined to be about 3 times that of dwellings 11 to 20 years old.

Mr. Northedge showed the participants photographic slides of hazardous wiring conditions found in an older home in Prince Georges County, Maryland. Many of the wiring hazards depicted in the slides have been identified in the 1987 report as causes for fires.

Mr. Thompson outlined a proposal to the other participants for getting the NFPA 73 inspection code into the existing Maryland Liveability Code. His proposal will stipulate that all electrical equipment must be installed in accordance with NFPA 70, the National Electrical Code and maintained in accordance with NFPA 73, Residential Electrical Maintenance Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings. Mr. Thompson plans to prepare his proposal and submit it to the Housing and Community Development department. The participants agreed that if all went well the proposal would be introduced to the state legislature in next year's session. The Maryland Liveability Code applies to one- and two-family rental properties and is enforced upon receiving a complaint.

Mr. Cronauer indicated that rental property of three or more units is covered by the Maryland State Fire Prevention Code. The fire prevention code stipulates that the electrical wiring in multi-family rental property must meet the requirements of the National Electrical Code, NFPA 70. Enforcement of the fire prevention code becomes quite complex. However, it appears that two of the most important ways of enforcement is through state licensure and local building permits. For example, to convert an existing residential dwelling to rental units or a day care center a license would be required for operation. The Maryland State Fire Marshal's office must sign off on that license; hence, Mr. Cronauer's office would inspect the building for fire hazards.