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**Prepared Statement
before the Manufactured Housing Consensus Committee
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Delivered by Tony Baker, Government Relations Manager, IAFC
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Manufactured Housing Consensus Committee. I am Tony Baker with the International Association of Fire Chiefs' (IAFC) and its Fire and Life Safety Section. I thank the committee for the opportunity today to represent the views of the IAFC and IAFC's Fire and Life Safety Section on a topic that we take very seriously – fire sprinklers.

To put it simply, fire sprinklers installed in any type of structure saves lives and property.

Over the weekend in Alorton, Illinois, a trailer caught on fire and claimed the life a man in his 30s. While the cause of the fire is still under investigation, it appears that fire sprinklers were not installed in this particular manufactured housing unit. The deceased was found in the back room of his home and was dead when firefighters arrived on the scene at 4:20 am. According to a local media report, they believe he died from smoke inhalation.

When we hear of these instances, we are definitely saddened but from what we have learned and what we know from data, we really should not be surprised. Research clearly shows the need and the benefits that fire sprinklers provide. Fires in manufactured housing claim at least 30 percent more lives than in other one- and two-family housing structures.

According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), "fires in manufactured homes claim the lives of 345 American each year and injure 765 more." Further, USFA data shows that manufactured homes account for 17,700 fires with \$155 million in property losses. I am sure that many are wondering how that compares with other types of structures and other data.

By contrast, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) analyzed data from 2005-2009 and estimates that an average of 12,400 fires per year resulting in a annual average of 234 civilian deaths, 453 civilian injuries, and \$186 million in direct property damage. This data excludes fires with confined structure fire incident types – NFIRS incident types 113-118.

During this same period, manufactured homes had a fire death rate per 100,000 occupied units that was 30-44 percent higher than in other occupied one- or two-family homes. The USFA states that manufactured homes have a fire death rate per 100,000 housing units that is 32-50 percent higher.

We know that many of these fires are in fact caused by heating and electrical system malfunctions and improper storage of combustibles and that 85 percent of all U.S. fire deaths occur in the home. We also know that when both fire sprinklers and smoke alarms are installed in a residence, the risk of dying from a fire is reduced by at least 82 percent. According to the NFPA, sprinklers typically reduce the chances of dying in a fire and reduce the average property loss by one-half to two-thirds compared to fires where sprinklers are not present.

In the fire service, we are in the business of saving lives and saving property. With sound prevention strategies, we can do both. The IAFC issued a position statement in 2008 calling for fire sprinklers to be included in all new construction, including one- and two-family dwellings, to protect the public, fire service personnel, the structure, its contents, the economy and the environment. The IAFC's statement continues, "It's time to add active fire protection as a baseline in all new construction." I have brought a copy of this position statement to have entered into the record for this Committee to examine as you continue your important work.

The USFA's position on fire sprinklers in homes is, "All homes should be equipped with both smoke alarms and automatic fire sprinklers, and all families should have and practice an emergency escape plan." With that being a stated position from one arm of the federal government, why would a different arm of the federal government leave residents of manufactured homes out of this life-saving equation? You have the power and the responsibility to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens. And while the fire I described early took the life of a man in his 30s, please keep in mind that young children account for more than one-fifth of all fire deaths in manufactured homes.

The man in Alorton, Illinois died before the fire department was able to arrive. We find that is often the case, even in an urban setting. In rural settings, there is often no chance of rescue or effective fire control by the fire department. Manufactured housing is frequently placed in rural locations where fire department response times exceed the ability to effectively intervene in a fire before flashover occurs. Through August of this year,

there have been at least 27 documented deaths from fire in manufactured housing.

Further, a recent study of rural fires showed that smoke alarms were less likely to be present or operating in manufactured homes.

The only reliable method to control a fire in these environments, and protect the occupants, is early extinguishment by a residential fire sprinkler system.

I am sure that this Committee has heard or will hear from different actors opposed to mandatory fire sprinkler systems in manufactured housing. They may say that sprinkler systems waste water, but keep in mind that fire sprinklers flow as low as 10 gallons per minute. By contrast, fire department hose streams average 125 gallons per minute. And when battling a manufactured home fire, typically multiple hose streams are required. You may hear of opposition to installing fire sprinkler systems, but keep in mind that many manufactured home suppliers offer fire sprinklers as an option. In addition, just as with any type of residential structure, manufactured housing can be retrofitted with fire sprinklers. And on the financial side, most insurance companies provide financial incentives for fire sprinklers in homes. Research has shown that these discounts reduce insurance premiums by an average of seven percent.

The standards and codes associations are trying to put data that we've learned into action to save lives. NFPA 501, Standard on Manufactured Housing, 2010 edition, recognizes the need of fire sprinklers in the residential environment with a requirement in section 5.11 stating that "All new manufactured homes shall be protected throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system."

The International Code Council's International Residential Code, has recognized the need for fire sprinklers in the residential environment with a requirement in P2904.1.1 stating that "Sprinklers shall be installed to protect all areas of a dwelling unit."

Fire sprinkler systems save lives. Fire sprinkler systems save property. The fire service and the IAFC believes in being proactive in providing community fire protection. As included in the IAFC position statement, fire sprinklers will provide the active protection needed to reduce the fire risk of these building components to citizens and firefighters. Your committee will receive various views from across the spectrum on this issue. Your committee will receive various statistics as proof. I ask your committee to remember this statistic: The NFPA has no record of a fire killing more than two people in a

completely sprinklered public assembly or educational, institutional, commercial, or residential building where the system was working properly.

The fire death rate is at least 30 percent higher in manufactured housing and young children account one-fifth of these deaths. Sprinklers save lives.

Chairman Weinert and members of this committee, thank you again for your time. The International Association of Fire Chiefs stands ready to work with your committee as you move forward.

Thank you.