



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Common Voices, National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors Champion Fire Sprinklers After New Year's Day Fires in MA

Holyoke, Mass., Jan. 6, 2017 – On New Year's Day morning two apartment fires raged in Massachusetts. Fire ripped through a Holyoke apartment building claiming the lives of three residents and displaced over 50 others. Fire also quickly raced through a Lynn apartment building displacing over 65 residents, many barely escaping. Both of these incidents also placed hundreds of firefighters at risk.

These tragedies underscore the fire problem that exists in Massachusetts and our nation, and provides us an opportunity to focus on prevention and how we can protect our families. Technology exists that can prevent these heartbreaking events.

"The U.S. fire service has endorsed fire sprinklers as one of its major strategies to keep firefighters and citizens safe," says Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki, Executive Director of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) "Firefighters Life Safety Initiative #15 states that the enforcement of codes and the installation of fire sprinklers is a priority and tragedies like this underscore the importance of fire sprinklers."

Fire sprinklers save lives, and had they been present in this fire the outcome would have been much different. Scientific research from Underwriters Laboratories reveals rapid fire spread is intensified using building contents that have changed significantly in recent years, contributing to the decrease in time to untenable (life threatening) conditions. UL also recommends that residents close their doors as they escape the fire to limit its ability to spread.

Smoke detectors and fire alarms play a role in early warning of the occupants, however fire is fast and as indicated in this tragic event there is limited time for citizens to escape and firefighters to arrive. Without fire sprinklers, the odds of escaping decreases quickly as flashover can occur in three to five minutes.

"I had no idea how fast fire was prior to losing 6 members of my family in a 2015 fire," adds Sher Grogg, Common Voices Advocate. "Fire is fast, and no one survives flashover. My family didn't know this and smoke alarms were not enough. Fire sprinklers are the solution that buys time, and time buys life in these situations."

Properly installed and maintained fire sprinklers can help prevent tragedies like these from occurring in the future. Look up for safety and see if you have fire sprinklers, ask for them in your new apartment or home and if you have them now check with the building managers to make sure they are maintained.

We urge you to check the batteries in your smoke alarms, educate yourself on the current fire protection requirements in your own city and state, and learn how to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community from fire. Our thoughts and prayers are with the survivors, those who lost their lives, their families and friends following this tragedy.

"We hope that we can all focus on fire safety and learn from this tragedy," adds Amy Acton, Executive Director of the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. "Fire does not discriminate and can strike at any time. Please listen to fire chiefs and make sure you choose an apartment with fire sprinklers and install fire sprinklers when building a new home."

For more details about the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Life Safety Initiatives, please visit www.firehero.org. NFFF was created by Congress to lead a nationwide effort to remember America's fallen firefighters. Since 1992, the tax-exempt, non-profit Foundation has developed and expanded programs to honor our fallen fire heroes and assist their families and coworkers.

About Common Voices: Common Voices (www.fireadvocates.org) is an advocates' coalition of members who all have been directly affected by fire. By bringing their voices together, they hope to educate others regarding fire and its devastating impact. Their mission is to create a fire safe America by sharing their stories, creating resources that educate and sharing fire statistics.

About Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors: Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors is the leading non-profit organization helping burn survivors meet their challenges with the community support and tools they need to thrive again, and to ensure that no survivor ever has to make that journey alone. Working with survivors, families, healthcare professionals, fire service professionals, we are uniting the voice of the burn community across the globe to profoundly advance lifelong healing, optimal recovery, and burn prevention. (www.phoenix-society.org)

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