
Committee Meeting

of

ASSEMBLY HOUSING COMMITTEE

“Investigate the issue of fire safety in State institutions and public and independent institutions of higher education”

LOCATION: Committee Room 9
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: February 1, 2000
1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman John V. Kelly, Chairman
Assemblywoman Carol J. Murphy, Vice-Chairman
Assemblyman David C. Russo
Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley



ALSO PRESENT:

Joyce W. Murray
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide*

John G. Murphy
*Assembly Majority
Committee Aide*

Gabriela Mosquera
*Assembly Democratic
Committee Aide*

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ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN V. KELLY (Chairman): So we're going to start. Does that make sense?

I'm going to take these as I get them.

Thomas Canzanella, Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey, do you care to testify?

THOMAS CANZANELLA: Just a few words.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay. If they make sense, that's good. If you don't make sense, I'll throw you out.

MR. CANZANELLA: I'll leave that up to you. You're the Chairman.

I prepared some remarks and distributed them with the clerk. What I will say to keep it short and sweet is that the firefighters union in New Jersey supports the advancement of legislation that has to do with sprinklers and standpipes, especially as it relates to going back and retrofitting some of these existing buildings, and certainly, for new construction, where we are going to have a high occupancy load. What we hope will become part of these discussions along the way, and I know you would like to limit them in nature, is to take a look at public fire protection in general. Everyone wants to put their college in a rural or suburban community that has a population of 20,000, 30,000 or more, and they have fire protection -- a fire department designed, we hope, to meet those responsibilities of that community.

When you begin to put medical centers and colleges that create a community within the community with 1000, 2000 people in a concentrated location, we need as a fire service to be able to respond there adequately. And certainly, the fire departments that responded initially, by their own admission

in the paper, with no disrespect intended, they admit that they were not adequately staffed to respond to that fire, and that's by the chief's own admission. They did a yeoman's job in their response, given the odds against them. But if we're going to talk about bettering the odds for citizens to survive a fire and to have property conservation, the fire department can't have two strikes against them. We can't respond with one and two people on an apparatus and two or three engine companies.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I'm going to put you out of order, because we're here to discuss sprinklers--

MR. CANZANELLA: Not at all. I understand that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: --and we're not going to discuss manpower. That's another issue. Okay?

MR. CANZANELLA: I understand that--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

MR. CANZANELLA: --and I appreciate you waiting to rule me out of order until I got my two cents in.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay. You got your two cents in.

MR. CANZANELLA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Darby Greer -- is that right? Greer, Executive Director of-- Oh, Darryl, I'm sorry. Darryl G. Greer, Executive Director, New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities.

You have the floor.

D A R R Y L G. G R E E R: Thank you, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: We're going to discuss sprinkler systems.

MR. GREER: Sprinklers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to speak. I'm Darryl Greer. I head the Association of the State Colleges and Universities, which have about 80,000 students, 14,000 of whom reside in dormitories at our campuses.

Mr. Chairman, let me, since you've been moving quickly-- I have testimony which I won't--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Well, you can summarize it, I hope.

MR. GREER: Yes. I will. I will summarize it, which I won't read, but let me start by, and with the Chair's indulgence, of introducing some individuals who you and your Committee may want to call on for some expert opinion or insight. First, Dr. R. Barbara Gitenstein, who is the President of the College of New Jersey, is with us; also Dr. Karen Pennington, Vice President for student development and campus life at Montclair State University; and Mr. Greg Bressler, who is Associate Vice President for facilities management and planning. At the Chair's discretion, you may wish to call them up to entertain any of your questions.

I just want to reiterate for the Committee that the boards of trustees take fire safety very, very seriously. They acted swiftly after the Seton Hall fire and the tragic loss of three students' lives to reassess policies and procedures and systems. Fundamentally, they believe that fire protection has to be looked at from a policy level, including administrative support and enforcement. Also, we have to have a well-trained and prepared staff. And a third dimension we often overlook, but it's the most critical one, is that this all

has to be complemented by students, staff, quality behavior, and especially in crisis situations, as we had recently.

On close examination, as you know, Mr. Chairman, fire prevention and fire suppression technology is very complex. There is no one single solution. Before I complete my statement, I do want to share with you what the Chair has asked for. We have a table summarizing the status of the dormitories at the eight residential State colleges and universities. As you know, Thomas Edison has no residential capacity. My staff has prepared this in close cooperation with the institutions. If we can hand that out, then you and the members will see where we stand regarding the students housed at our campuses.

Regarding any recommendation, Mr. Chairman-- Before I come to that, you'll see from the table what we should do at the State colleges this year. By the end of this academic year, roughly half of the students will be housed in dormitories with sprinklers, approximately half will not be. The vice presidents for finance administration indicate this is a very rough, very rough estimate -- that installing sprinkler systems in our dorms without them might cost as much as \$16 million to \$20 million. And again, that is just a very preliminary estimate.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: That's for all your eight colleges you're talking about?

MR. GREER: Yes. That's just for the eight State colleges and universities.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

MR. GREER: Besides sprinklers, I would suggest to the Committee, respectfully, that we need to look at other state-of-the-art systems to help suppress and detect fires. Sprinklers may not be the sole solution. It is a very expensive proposition. We need to take our time, as I'm sure the Chair and the Committee members and this Legislature and the Governor--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Excuse me, that's why I want all the bills dealing with this problem to come to me. I'm going to sit on it until we have the answers on them.

MR. GREER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last, I want to thank not only the-- Another key element in fire safety beyond the campus is very strong and working relationships with local fire authorities, and I think we have that at the State colleges and universities in all our communities. Also, a critical part in the State of New Jersey -- and our friends and colleagues at DCA and other important State agencies that help us with planning and with code compliance. So we'll need the cooperation, Mr. Chairman, of you, the legislators, and the Governor and her executive agencies, including DCA and others.

And with that, we're completing a survey of information that you and the Governor have asked for, and we'll be happy to share that with you in toto, I hope, by the end of the week, once we complete it, but we have given you the summary of what you asked for.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

MR. GREER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Do you have any questions? (no response)

No questions. You're finished.

Who do we got here now?

Bill Cane, Director, Division of Fire Safety. I think I know him--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CHARLES A. RICHMAN: I was going to introduce him to the Committee, but since you know him, it works.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: --and the other is Mr. Richman.

You've got the floor, sir.

WILLIAM H. CANE: Thank you, sir. Thank you for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. Assemblyman, Committee, New Jersey adopted a statewide Uniform Fire Code in 1985, and this is the only true statewide code enforced and overseen by a state agency in this country. Since 1985, the Fire Code included retrofit requirements of existing buildings. Examples of the retrofit items specific to dormitories would include such things as automatic fire alarms, smoke detection in dwelling units, manual fire alarms, protection of means of egress -- by that I mean solid core doors with enclosures -- protection of interior stairways, and emergency lighting and exit signs.

As a result of the New Jersey Fire Code, civilian deaths in the State of New Jersey have dropped, from a high in 1985 of 190, to 54 in 1999. We believe that this is a direct result of New Jersey's Fire Code, as well as an outstanding enforcement at its local levels. This gives New Jersey one of the lowest fire-death rates in the United States, and this is something that we can all be very proud of.

In an attempt to continue to improve fire safety in New Jersey, the Code's Advisory Council to the New Jersey Fire Safety Commission is

currently working on recommending changes in the Code to require sprinklers in high-rise residential occupancies not currently required. Since this tragedy at Seton Hall, we will be requesting the Council to consider all dormitories, including those located at high schools, as well as fraternity and sorority houses. We believe it will cost as upwards of \$4 per square foot to retrofit some of these facilities.

The implementation of time frames of any new requirements for retrofitting must be realistic. We also believe that we should enhance the safety of the public by supporting the Consumer Product Safety Commission's proposed creation of mandatory furniture flammability standards. If Federal action is not forthcoming, we should consider to adopt the California standard or a similar one.

The attitude of students and the faculty towards fire safety and, in particular, false alarms must be changed -- must be changed to recognize that this is a serious problem, with serious and sometimes deadly consequences. Serious injury and death may not only happen to those in buildings, but also threaten the responding emergency personnel.

In fact, Governor Whitman and the Legislature recognized the seriousness of this problem by passing legislation last summer making the reporting of a false alarm a third-degree crime. If the false alarm results in a serious injury or death, it becomes a crime of the second degree. Those responsible for malicious false alarms must be dealt with sternly. Colleges and universities must prosecute those responsible for such dangerous acts. We must also look forward to technology to assist with the unnecessary fire alarm

problems. The existing technology may now help us, but attitudes will take a long time to change.

It's ironic that the United States Fire Administration distributed, just this past summer to all colleges throughout the country, a new program aimed at fire safety in student housing in colleges and universities. We'll be supporting the National Association of State Fire Marshals' effort to secure Federal funding to assist states and local authorities in its implementation.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: You threw out a figure of \$4 a foot. Do you know how many feet there are?

MR. CANE: Assemblyman, we gathered that information for the Code Council on high-rise buildings. We are gathering that and have some preliminary numbers that we'll be sharing with the Code Council and, of course, we can make it available to yourself and anyone in the Legislature for college dormitories and your high school, private schools with dormitories, as we don't have a handle on fraternities and sororities yet.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I'm not questioning-- I'm saying, you don't know how many square feet we have to retrofit? That's what I'm saying. In total, you don't know?

MR. CANE: We do on the high-rise issue that the Code Council is looking--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: But not in the colleges?

MR. CANE: I don't have the exact number yet for colleges, although we're not far from having all that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Oh, okay.

MR. RICHMAN: We will have that for you at the next meeting of the Fire Commission.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: The Fire Commission meeting?

MR. CANE: Actually, we'll have it before then.

MR. RICHMAN: Before then?

MR. CANE: We'll have that before that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Because I wear a couple of hats. I'm the Chairman of the Fire Commission, so this is interesting.

Thank you.

MR. CANE: Any questions at all?

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Anybody in the audience have any questions? (no response)

By the way, what is the California Code? You said that, and I'm curious.

MR. CANE: Yes. Well, I think we've talked about that a couple of times at the State Fire Commission meeting. California leads the country in its requirements for the use of nonflammable materials in furniture. To this date, they're the only state.

Somebody smiling behind me here. (referring to someone in audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: No, me. I had a bill that did that, if you recall.

MR. CANE: I know you did.

MR. RICHMAN: And in fact--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: It didn't go anywhere, but I had the bill.

MR. CANE: Well, I think possibly it's starting to -- certainly take a look at that again.

MR. RICHMAN: There have been petitions pending before the Consumer Product Safety Commission, for about six years, asking that the California standard be adopted nationally.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: They move pretty quick, don't they?

MR. RICHMAN: Yes.

MR. CANE: Assemblyman, I believe that you stated, and I believe you are correct, that it's approximately the cost of a pizza to add that protection to these kinds of -- to this furniture.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: We're going to try again.

Thank you.

MR. CANE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Anybody in the audience have any questions for the record? (no response) No, okay.

Thank you, Mr. Cane.

Do you have any comments, Mr. Richman, or are you finished?

MR. RICHMAN: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Oh, okay.

MR. RICHMAN: Just the \$4-a-square-foot. The \$4-a-square-foot equates very closely to what it costs to put carpeting in, so that gives you an idea. This is not a dramatic expense. In the cumulative high, it's the cost of carpeting.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Interesting.

Mr. Naylis, would you like to testify?

GERARD J. NAYLIS: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: You have the floor.

MR. NAYLIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and the Committee for permitting me to provide testimony today, although I must say, from the very beginning, that I am saddened at the events that caused this hearing to be held. The fire that occurred at Seton Hall University on Wednesday, January 19, 2000, will forever be etched in the minds of many people. In a word, the fire was devastating. Surprisingly, the fire itself was not all that big. Published reports suggest that the fire was confined to the third floor lounge of Boland Hall, with smoke, heat, and water damage to the contiguous hallways, but the human toll was gut wrenching. Three young men had their lives snuffed out. Sixty-two people were injured. Several of these victims suffered significant burn injuries and are still in critical condition. To say that their lives will never be the same would be an understatement. So today we sit here in an attempt to find answers as to why this tragedy happened, and what can we do to make sure that it doesn't happen again.

First, I have to say that our history is replete with examples of horrific fires that resulted in changes to our fire and building codes. Some of these events happened right here in our own state. The unfortunate truth is that, for some reason, we must always make a prepayment in human life and sacrifice before society is willing to accept what fire protection professionals

have been saying for years. The fire at Seton Hall is further proof of this societal mind-set.

I do not wish to comment on the cause of the fire, as it is still under investigation. The process is slow and time consuming, unfortunate but necessary.

I would like to comment on the fire protection issues. Boland Hall did not have automatic sprinkler protection. At the time of the construction of the building and the subsequent addition, automatic sprinkler protection was not required and, therefore, not installed. Rarely will anyone provide protection over and above code requirements. The misconception is that the building and fire codes provide optimal protection. In fact, codes are political documents that represent the lowest level of protection that is acceptable to the largest number of people.

The building was equipped with standpipes. These are pipes that the fire hoses can be attached to that would allow the fire to be fought. At the time of the fire, the published reports indicated that the standpipe hoses had been disconnected and were in the process of being discarded. Several news reports suggested that if the hoses had been in place, the fire could have been attacked by occupants of the building prior to the arrival of the fire department.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: But, excuse me, that doesn't make sense, having the children--

MR. NAYLIS: Let me continue, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay. Go ahead.

MR. NAYLIS: While it sounds like a good idea--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Oh?

MR. NAYLIS: --it can be dangerous at best and fatal at worst. The current thinking of fire service professionals is that people should evacuate a building that is on fire. Period. The toxic gases that are produced by a fire involving most combustibles can quickly impair judgment and cause an individual to be quickly overcome. Secondly, because of the widespread use of plastics in our living environment, fires today burn with greater speed and generate higher heat-release rates than years ago.

OSHA regulations do not permit a trained firefighter to enter a building to fight a fire without respiratory protection and full protective equipment. Why would we even think about encouraging an untrained building occupant to fight a fire and risk their life? The better course is to have the occupants leave the building. The standpipes should be used by trained and well-equipped firefighters, who bring their own hoses.

We know from published reports that there were at least 17 false fire alarms at Boland Hall since September. When many of the students who occupied Boland Hall were asked why they didn't evacuate when the fire alarms sounded, the answer was the same, "We thought it was just another false alarm." The occupants had been conditioned to believe that if the alarm bell was activated, there was no fire but rather a false alarm, a prank, no danger. In the early morning hours of January 19, it was the real thing -- a fire that would have deadly impact.

I have a single question regarding the false fire alarms that allowed an errant mind-set to be created. Why wasn't something done to address the

false fire alarm issue? I will leave that question to be answered by the people responsible.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I want to interrupt. Isn't it true, this goes on in every college -- pranks -- playing with the fire alarms?

MR. NAYLIS: That doesn't make it right, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I know that, but it's a common practice.

Okay, continue.

MR. NAYLIS: So we must now ask ourselves, what can we learn from this tragic event and what can be done to prevent it from happening again?

The lack of automatic sprinkler protection is, perhaps, the single, largest factor that allowed this fire to kill three people and injure another sixty-two. The National Fire Protection Association has never been able to document a single instance of a multiple loss of life in a building with a fully functioning and adequately designed automatic sprinkler system, in more than 100 years that these systems have been installed. Had this building been equipped with a fully functioning and adequately designed automatic sprinkler system, this fire would have been a relatively minor event.

As a side note, Mr. Chairman, there was a fire at Cornell University this past weekend. I daresay that probably most people didn't hear about it. A single sprinkler had confined that fire.

There are six recognized benefits of automatic sprinklers. First, they are always on duty, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Second, they operate only in the area of fire. Modern day television has created a false

image of how sprinklers work. They do not all go off at the same time, and they are not triggered by smoke detectors.

The third benefit is that they operate quickly, even before the fastest fire department could reach the scene. Fourth, the flow of water can transmit a signal to summon the fire department. Fifth, the discharge from the operating sprinklers will pre-wet the surrounding area, making it more difficult for the fire to spread. Sixth, sprinklers use less water than fire hoses to control the fire.

Of course, all of these benefits come at a cost. Fortunately, advances in automatic sprinkler technology have produced sprinklers that are able to be installed in a sidewall position and can protect a room measuring 16 feet by 24 feet. Now, the average dormitory room can be protected by a single sprinkler.

Other advances include the development of special plastic sprinkler piping that makes retrofits easier and less costly. Also, the residential sprinkler that was first developed approximately 20 years ago, specifically, to assure that people who are trapped in a fire where they live will have sufficient time to escape. Obviously, the installation cost to retrofit a building would depend on the design requirements and construction features of each building. The existing standpipes could be used to supply water for those sprinklers.

Students view dormitories and student housing as their home away from home. Fire death statistics, for both New Jersey and the United States, clearly demonstrate that, year after year, most fire deaths -- 75 percent to 80 percent -- occur in the home where people live and should feel the safest. In fact, the home is the most dangerous of all places in a fire. Simply stated, the

single best way to assure fire protection and safety of building occupants from a fire is the installation of automatic sprinkler protection.

Having said this, I feel compelled to raise another issue that would create a severe financial hardship should automatic sprinkler protection be required in college dormitories and in student housing. The issue is water supply standby charges.

Water supply standby charges are fees assessed by water providers for the privilege of having your sprinkler system hooked up to the water supply system. Regardless of whether you ever actually use the sprinkler system, water providers exact a fee from every property owner that has a sprinkler system installed. In effect, we have created a system of disincentives, where people that install automatic sprinkler protection are penalized for improving fire safety, reducing the cost of a water supplier's infrastructure, and conserving water.

A fire in a sprinklered building will require significantly less water to extinguish than a fire in an unsprinklered building that relies on firefighters using fire department hoses. The difference can be tens of thousands, if not millions, of gallons of water. A collateral benefit of automatic sprinkler protection is that they are environmentally friendly by conserving an important natural resource, water, as we experienced in our drought last year.

I believe that the public good would be better served if the standby fees paid to water providers were prohibited. Rather, the State government should be looking for ways that encourage the installation of automatic sprinkler protection, instead of creating a mechanism that will do nothing more than enrich water providers.

I have a number of recommendations that I would urge this Committee to include in legislation to increase the safety of New Jersey's citizens from fire. I ask that you demonstrate the courage that is required regarding these recommendations and not take a Band-Aid approach by selectively requiring protection upgrades in limited application.

1) All college dormitories and student housing should be required to install automatic sprinkler protection. All common areas, such as hallways, should be completed within three years and all occupied spaces within five years.

2) All high-rise buildings should be required to install automatic sprinkler protection. All common areas should be completed within seven years and all other occupied spaces within a maximum of fifteen years.

3) Water supply standby charges should be prohibited on all automatic sprinkler systems serving residential buildings and on all other buildings where the connection is six inches or less. Water providers should be allowed to recover their costs of installation and the cost of the water used thereafter.

4) The Uniform Construction Code should be amended to require automatic sprinkler protection in all new construction.

5) The local fire official should be empowered to assess penalties against individuals for failing to leave a building when the fire alarm has activated.

6) Require schools to notify the local fire official or the local enforcing agency any time there are two or more malicious, false fire alarms transmitted in any 12-month period; require a corrective action plan to

eliminate false fire alarms, and make failure to make these notifications considered a criminal offense.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I recognize that it will be necessary to have a fund of money in order to assist colleges in providing sprinkler protection. Therefore, I would recommend that the State consider setting aside \$10 million a year, for the next five years, to be put into a fund that could be borrowed against at a low interest rate, of perhaps 2 percent, to aid colleges in putting in this sprinkler protection. That revolving fund could then be used further to extend sprinkler retrofits to other types of living spaces throughout the state, and advance the cause of fire safety.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: What made you pick that figure? Here's one group of colleges, say \$20 million. That doesn't include-- That's just one group. Fifty million looks like a pittance.

MR. NAYLIS: That's true. But on a revolving fund basis, Mr. Chairman, the money could be paid back, and it could go forward to pay for additional sprinkler systems. That's the idea of a low-cost loan program.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I understand a revolving fund, but I'm of the opinion we're talking about 300 or 400 million.

MR. NAYLIS: I don't know that it would be that high, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Well, just based on that 32 million from Rutgers I've heard, we're talking about big bucks.

MR. NAYLIS: The other thing that you have to recognize is that, even if we mandated all buildings be sprinklered today, it would take us a period of time for that work to be done. Colleges face an additional burden,

in that they only have a certain window of opportunity during summer months, when student housing is not occupied, in order to do much of the retrofit type of work. So, therefore, it's necessary to spread this out over a period of time in order to accomplish it. I applaud those colleges that are making the effort and have put sprinkler protection in a number of their dorms on a retrofit basis.

I think the time is now for us to set aside some money and continue going forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I don't disagree with you, but I disagree with the amount.

Do you have any questions?

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Out of total ignorance, when the alarm signals, whether it is a false alarm or real fire, do the sprinklers automatically go on, false alarm or not false alarm?

MR. NAYLIS: No. If an automatic detector such as a smoke detector activates--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Correct.

MR. NAYLIS: --the sprinklers do not activate. Sprinklers only activate if there is sufficient heat to melt the fusible link and cause the water to flow.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: But the alarm has no direct relationship to the--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: No.

MR. NAYLIS: That's correct. They are two separate, independent systems.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: So far, I'm not getting what I want. I'm trying to find out what is the approximate amount of money we're going to have to get to sprinkler the whole State of New Jersey and including the high schools or prep schools, whatever they are.

Who else wants to testify? (no response)

MR. NAYLIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

Anybody have any questions of Mr. Naylis? (no response)

None? Okay.

MR. MURPHY (Majority Staff): Mr. Chairman, I do.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Go ahead.

MR. MURPHY: (indiscernible)

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I lost you. Speak louder.

MR. MURPHY: The Cornell University fire, do you have further details on that? He said, a sprinkler system at Cornell?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: He mentioned there had been a fire at Cornell.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: They had a sprinkler system is what you said.

MR. NAYLIS: That's correct. There was a fire this past weekend, and I don't have all the details. But what I do have is that it was in a

dormitory building, and that a single sprinkler head extinguished the fire in a living room, dwelling room.

MR. MURPHY: Was it in a dormitory room?

MR. NAYLIS: That's my understanding, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: In a common room in a dormitory?

MR. NAYLIS: No. No. In a dwelling room.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Naylis.

MR. NAYLIS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Dr. James Sulton, Executive Director, Commission on Higher Education.

JAMES SULTON JR., Ph.D.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, my name is James Sulton. I serve as the Executive Director of the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. And first of all, I would like to convey my heartfelt appreciation to you, Chairman Kelly, for convening this forum and for all the members of the Assembly Housing Committee for being a part of it. All here share a common desire to do everything possible to avoid any tragedies similar to the one that has just occurred at Seton Hall.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to express their sorrow and concern regarding this recent tragedy. Nothing tears at our soul more than the recollection of that service that was held last Thursday at Seton Hall, and the pain and heartache that affected the entire community of that institution.

Our testimony and the Committee's discussion today is the first step, hopefully, in developing a strategy to provide additional safety measures as quickly and as effectively as possible. The higher education community, in the State of New Jersey, is gathering information now, about existing dormitories and policies, to help answer your question and to help inform decision making as we proceed.

As a result of this tragedy, I expect every institution is reviewing fire safety policies and procedures, as our local and State fire safety oversight entities. I realize that there are already at least two different legislative proposals related to the mandatory fire suppression systems in dormitories and institutions of higher education throughout the State of New Jersey. There is a need to carefully consider various proposals, and we want to do so in the most expeditious manner possible.

As the coordinating body for higher education, the Commission offers its assistance and is eager to work with the various bill sponsors, the Department of Community Affairs, the Fire Safety Commission, and other higher education entities to reach the most effective means possible to provide additional safety measures for our college and university students.

That ends my testimony, Mr. Chairman. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to respond.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: You're going to come up with some estimates on the buildings that do not have sprinkler systems?

DR. SULTON: Yes, sir. We are working on that in conjunction with our institutions and their governing boards as we speak.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: When do you expect to have that?

DR. SULTON: I should expect within the next week or so, we should be able to have that. I think our colleague from the State Colleges and Universities said that he hoped to have something by the end of the week. I think you already have some figures from Rutgers that you referred to, so a week's time should probably give us an opportunity to do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I think it's going to be more than \$50 million, too?

DR. SULTON: And while I'm not a betting person, and this is certainly not a betting game, but I expect it will be extremely expensive.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

Any questions? (no response) No.

Thank you.

DR. SULTON: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Jay Kohl and Joe Zuccarello. You're with Rutgers University, I presume?

JAY KOHL: Yes, sir.

Assemblyman Kelly, I'm Jay Kohl, the Executive Director for Public Safety; with me is Chief Joe Zuccarello, from Rutgers, the Emergency Services Chief. On behalf of Rutgers University, thank you for allowing us this opportunity to talk about fire safety and its impact at Rutgers.

You have already alluded to the approximate cost to do the retrofitting at Rutgers. That's the best estimate that we have at this time. What we would like to do is take this opportunity to talk about some of the things that we have been doing and are doing at Rutgers, in regards to fire safety, and talk about some of the things you've already heard -- the

comprehensive type program that it takes to really have an impact on all fire safety, in other words, fire safety systems that we're talking about here, the alarm systems, but also the training that has to go with that.

One of the things that we have already alluded to is, as much as we have systems that actuate and talk about fire arrest, we're still struggling with the educational component of getting students to actually leave when we have an alarm. There is a lot of problems with that. Some of it is, of course, the false alarms that go on. But we were hoping to give an overview of some of the things we've already done and the cost for putting in those systems, and some of the other prevention programs that have had an impact on actually saving lives. Of course, some of those things you've heard about, too, which the materials that are -- furnishings and so on and so forth. Rutgers has been doing that and has had very good fortune of that.

So we have prepared an overview sheet for you, a fact sheet of the history at Rutgers and some talks about cost. So I'd like to share some of those facts with you briefly.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Is this going to deal with sprinklers or other-- This meeting is primarily-- We've met primarily to determine what we need for the sprinkler system. I admit you have to have education. You have to have fire drills.

MR. KOHL: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: But that doesn't deal with what I'm concerned about. I'm concerned about the cost of the sprinkler systems.

MR. KOHL: And I'll highlight those--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

MR. KOHL: --and certainly, I'll skip over the other things. The sheet is available for you to review regarding all the facts, but I'll just highlight the sprinklers. Probably the important thing to look at is what Rutgers has done over the last nine or ten years here, and they have gone through a very aggressive program of retrofitting all the high-rises. So at Rutgers now, everything that is a high-rise building is retrofitted and is totally sprinkled. It has sprinkler protection in it. That includes all of the buildings. In addition to that, we are talking about all the buildings in Camden and in Newark are totally sprinkled.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: When you say sprinkled, does this mean every room?

MR. KOHL: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

MR. KOHL: Yes. This is every room. I might say, in addition to that, we have many buildings that are partially sprinkled. So we're talking about the common areas, for example, maybe the furnace room and the laundry rooms and things like that. The higher probability areas for fires have partial sprinkling in them. Now over the last--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: These are buildings that don't have sleeping quarters though, when you say partially sprinkled?

MR. KOHL: Some. Some of them, but some of them are also living quarters that are partially sprinkled.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: What are partially sprinkled?

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: He just said-- They have the sprinklers in the boiler room, but not in the rest of the building, the common areas.

MR. KOHL: Some of the common areas. Some of the areas where, historically, it's more likely that there could be a fire, and they were sprinkled, put sprinkler systems in them.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Is the intent to sprinkle the rest of the rooms in those buildings, or is that as far as you intend to go?

MR. KOHL: No. In terms of Rutgers' intent, there is an aggressive program to retrofit buildings. This, of course, is a long-term plan.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay. I understand.

MR. KOHL: Since 1990, the university has spent over \$8 million, just retrofitting the buildings they have. Chief Zuccarello's plan, over the years, has been to do so many buildings per year and to get this done. The problem, of course, is that all the buildings that are not high-rises still need more water and, of course, you're talking about the cost for that. The cost that you have is just the remaining buildings and what we estimate that cost would be. Chief Zuccarello can talk about some of the challenges in terms of, even if those systems were to be put in, what impact that would have on the university, and what it takes.

I think it's important to understand what it takes to really retrofit a building, and what it requires to shut that building down and the capacity maybe, even, to do those kinds of things. In a sense, Chief Zuccarello has been involved in this process right from the very beginning over the last 10 years that Rutgers has been doing it. He certainly can talk about the impact on the

university and some of the challenges to get into these buildings and actually do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

You have the floor.

CHIEF JOSEPH ZUCCARELLO: What I would like to say is that, in addition to what Mr. Kohl mentioned, Rutgers University has gone on record, since 1988, of providing and installing automatic sprinkler protection in every building, every new building that was under construction at that time. And the university also has made a sincere effort to include sprinkler protection in renovations to existing buildings, even though not required by the Construction Code or the Fire Safety Code.

One of the problems, and I hope the Committee would keep this in mind as they continue their review of the many pieces of legislation coming before you, is the definite problem and difficulty in the installation of these systems if the institutions of higher education are given a very small window. As Mr. Kohl stated, we have been working on fire protection upgrades now since about the 1990 fiscal year, and that includes not only sprinkler protection, but upgraded fire detection and alarm systems. And I can tell you that it's a very difficult task, especially when dealing with a high-rise, or even a larger low-rise building, to accomplish this task in that two-month window of opportunity.

I don't think it is adequate to expect anyone to accomplish this over a 12-month period. Certainly, you can't do this type of work in an occupied building. And actually watching this process every summer, as I have for the past number of years, we would be creating a lot of life-safety adverse

impacts if we expected the higher education communities to do this, simply because of the mechanics of this installation. So I think our point is that although sprinklers certainly are highly recommended that we really need to look at this in terms of an overall scope and the reasonableness of expecting everyone to comply within a very short window.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I'm only interested in complying. We can open the window as long as we need.

Go ahead.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: In addition to the sprinkler protection, I think we still do need to be very much aware of the need for other systems for early detection. Certainly, as you mentioned, the false alarm problem is consistent among all colleges and universities. Rutgers does not have the magic answer to that. We responded to 107 malicious false alarms last year. We do prosecute. Those who we find and are able to determine that they were the cause -- however, in the student population, we find that the residents, although we feel that they know who was activating the false alarms, are not forthcoming -- they don't want to come forward because of peer pressure, so that is a problem that is very, very hard to achieve and in trying to find out who is causing the false alarms.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Well, why don't they offer the one who turns them in a free tuition for a semester? And also, if you're caught doing it, you lose your credits for the whole year?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Well, right now the folks will, in addition to being prosecuted, they will also be removed from housing and face university judicial hearings, and the penalty for that includes possible

expulsion from the university. So when we are able to determine who is doing it, we take the steps.

We also have upgraded a lot of our fire alarm systems, especially in the freshman resident halls, which are the areas of the highest rate, providing a number of different systems to try and reduce the incidence of false alarms. We've not been highly successful, but we continue to strive ahead and attempt to reach that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

Do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Yes, please.

I noticed in your memorandum you've said that three additional buildings are scheduled for upgrade during the summer of the year 2000, and over \$8 million has been spent on this program since fiscal year 1990. How much do you anticipate the three additional buildings that are scheduled for upgrade will cost you in this summer, and what kinds of buildings are they?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: The three buildings scheduled for upgrade currently are scheduled for fire alarm upgrade. One building is already sprinklered, the other two are not. The remaining two are dormitories. They are older buildings dating back-- I think one dates back to the 1920s. The other one is probably around 1950 vintage, as I recall.

Usually what we have done is, since the funds for the Fire Code retrofit in the resident halls are funds accumulated by the Division of Housing, and these funds come from student fees, since it is our understanding that the current New Jersey law precludes the utilization of State funds for work in auxiliary enterprises which would include student centers, resident halls, and

dining facilities, the Division of Housing, out of their capital improvement and ongoing maintenance accounts, have set aside \$1 million a year. So what we've been doing is trying to do as much work in as many buildings as we can, during a given summer, for that \$1 million sum.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: If I may, Mr. Chairman? Then the two buildings that you will be working on that are dormitories, the older buildings that you'll be working on this summer, they are not to be sprinklered, or they are to be sprinklered? I misunderstood.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: The plan, prior to the tragedy at Seton Hall, was simply to upgrade the fire detection and alarm systems.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Correct.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: We have looked into the possibility of installing sprinklers at the same time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: All right. Now, these are old buildings, so it's a retrofitting job that's making it work. How many unit of rooms are there in each of those buildings? Do you remember, offhand?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: I don't remember offhand, but I do have that information here, and I can share it with you. One dormitory houses 66 students. The second one houses 170.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: And what do you now -- thinking of sprinklering as part of your thought at this time -- what do you anticipate, or do you have a round figure that you feel it would cost you to sprinkle these two old dorm buildings?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: I don't have that information available to me.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: You have no ballpark guess?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: No, I don't personally. Others have calculated that, but I have not been made aware of those numbers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Do you believe, with the kind of work that Rutgers has been doing and the sort of work you have been doing since fiscal year 1990, that what you spend on old buildings in terms of sprinkling them would be rather a ballpark average that could be used in a general way for anticipating the cost for all dorms across the state?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Yes. And I can tell you that the two university departments who have looked at the remaining stock of resident halls--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Correct.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: --and estimated the costs to provide sprinklers in each one of those facilities did, in fact, look at what we were spending over the past 10 years for the sprinkler upgrades that we did complete, and that's how they achieved the 33-million-plus total for the remaining university housing facilities.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: And, approximately, how many units are there in that remaining university housing facility program?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: That would be 68 dormitory buildings. That would be a little bit more than 4500 bed spaces.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Okay.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: And 73 apartment buildings, housing approximately 5000 bed spaces.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I want to ask you one other question. Does the cost of this sprinkler system -- has that caused the university to increase the tuition over the past few years?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Well, that would not have a bearing on tuition. It would be a student housing fee.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: That I certainly can't answer. I don't know.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Okay. Thank you.

Do you have a question, sir?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to apologize for being late. I had to switch my schedule around. I just found out yesterday, but really felt it really important to be here, being a father of a young lady who just graduated maybe a year and a half ago. I'm very much interested in this situation and in this particular issue. Also, being on the Assembly Education Committee, I felt it was important to come here and, also, am interested in hearing what other issues that may be related to fire safety, rather than have two committee hearings. Maybe some of those other issues might come out as well. However, I do want to ask -- you mentioned high-rise buildings, as opposed to, I guess, non-high-rise buildings, as far as sprinkler safety is concerned -- what is the, I guess, the cutoff for a high-rise?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: A high-rise building is defined as a building seven stories in height or 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department access.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Okay. Do we have a number of how many students are in-- Now, are any of those buildings that aren't considered high-rise buildings, are they sprinkler equipped or not?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: All of our high-rise buildings, whether they be on the New Brunswick-Piscataway campuses or the Newark or Camden campuses, all of our high-rise buildings are fully sprinklered. By that, I'm saying that every room, every space, regardless of whether it is a residential space or a service maintenance common space, every single space in all of the Rutgers University high-rise buildings are fully sprinklered. We have other buildings of two to four stories, some of them various ages -- also have a complete automatic sprinkler protection system within them.

So when we identify a sprinklered building, Rutgers University is saying that the entire building is sprinklered. Others may say that they have sprinklers in the building, but they may be limited in scope and simply service maintenance, storage trash rooms, and trash shoots, as Mr. Kohl mentioned. So Rutgers University also has some buildings falling within that criteria, but we choose to only state emphatically that when we identify a building as sprinklered, it is totally sprinklered.

MR. KOHL: In addition to that, any building that has been built since 1988 has been built with a sprinkler system, regardless of their size.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Based on the figures you gave us, 9500 beds, at the 33 million, is \$3400 a bed, roughly. That's a pretty good figure, I think.

Thank you.

Any other questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Sure. Just--

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: He had mentioned some things that he wanted to mention before, related to safety, and what you're doing at Rutgers to help improve fire safety there. If you might just give us a quick overview of some of those things that you're doing, so that we have them in the record, and the Education Committee can take a look at those?

If that would be all right with you, Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: What do you mean? The Education Committee is going to have a hearing on the same thing?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: No. No. That's what I'm trying to prevent.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Because I'll jump all over Mr. Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: That's what I'm trying to prevent.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Oh, okay.

MR. KOHL: Some of the things were brought up earlier, and I think they are important, because they really do deal with the whole prevention aspect, and some of them are reasonably cost-effective. The university has had a history of aggressively doing these things. And one of the things that was brought up was to have all furnishings and everything that's put into the apartment fireproofed. The university has done that, and there's been good results. Chief Zuccarello can talk about instances where fires have self-extinguished when it became trapped, almost, in this material, because that's what happens. That's the way it's designed, so that a fire can't spread.

The university has a history of doing these things and, Chief, maybe you can expound on it, some of the other things that are progressive, that are not mandated, but when you look at them, somewhat costly. But you weigh the cost against the benefit, and the university has a history of going out and doing these things without the mandates.

Chief, maybe you can talk a little bit about, especially the furnishings side of that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I'm going to interrupt here. Make it quick, because this meeting really is concerned about sprinklers.

Okay, I'll give you a few minutes.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Well, I believe, as Mr. Naylis had mentioned, the California standard -- and Rutgers University has followed the California fund ability standard for a number of years. So all furnishings in resident halls as well as academic buildings do meet that criteria. We also inspect every single dorm room and apartment, once per academic year. We have a staff of five New Jersey State Certified Fire Inspectors who do nothing but spend their entire time and energy simply maintaining fire safety on the university campuses.

We train all of the resident life staff. Just before the beginning of the academic year, they, in turn, train the student residents on fire safety. We have our own fire safety regulations that are certainly more stringent than the Uniform Fire Code provides. But we have a very specific type of occupancy and clientele that we need to approach.

We have a number of public safety programs that we carry on throughout the year and special period programs. So it's a total web of fire

safety that we weave, and I think it's not just mechanical systems. It's training, education, and enforcement.

MR. KOHL: And just one point to the mechanical systems, because I think it's important in something that Rutgers does is they have-- Once you have the water systems in place, it's very important to maintain those water systems. And, of course, it's costly to do that, and it requires personnel costs to do that.

At Rutgers, those systems are checked every month. There is a physical check on the water systems, and the pumps within those systems are checked by the Chief's employees on a regular basis. So people have to understand there is not only a cost for installing the system, and there's a maintenance of those systems. Because it doesn't make sense putting all those systems in and then find out that you're not maintaining them, and they're not working. But those are also considerations that have to be made, and it's something that Rutgers does on a regular basis.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Anyone else have any questions? (no response)

Anybody in the audience have any questions? (affirmative response from audience)

Come on up here. You have to state who you are, because this is being recorded. You have to get on the mike. (referring to PA mike) You could stand next to me if you'd like.

Sit on one of these seats right here (indicating seat on panel) with the mike. Push the button.

CHARLES W. SCHILLING: One question.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Sit down.

MR. SCHILLING: I don't really think I need to sit.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: You can sit down.

MR. SCHILLING: You mentioned the time and the trouble, the problem you would have, and I'm speaking from the Commission Code Council, Chairman, that is deeply involved with these retrofit packages for 10 years. Do you find a problem-- And Commissioner Naylis mentioned 5 years, 6 years to some of his proposals. We've been considering 5 to 7 years on a retrofit package on a normal retrofit building. Do you find fault with that? But I heard you mention you can't-- This would be a tremendous problem. Do you find a problem with 5 years, 7 years?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: I think it would be extremely difficult to do it within the 5 years. I think what needs to be addressed is possibly setting some priorities. We have prioritized our buildings to move ahead, and we have done it on the number of occupants residing in each building. The remaining buildings we have -- they're not sprinklered -- range anywhere from an occupancy of 200 down to 4 people. Every single housing facility that the university operates is not a full-scale dormitory, as many people perceive. So we have small buildings that are similar to a single-family residence, and we have a number of those, and we have apartment buildings.

MR. SCHILLING: I'm talking strictly high-rise now.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Oh, all of our high-rises are complete.

MR. SCHILLING: You're completed.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Oh, yes. We've been completed for two summers now.

MR. SCHILLING: Because we find, and we've completed a retrofit package from years ago on -- you probably were a part of it -- the situation worked out very well. And we're now trying to put together another package and, of course, with this Seton Hall tragedy, I don't think we'll have as much problem as we had in the past, unfortunately.

MS. MURRAY (Committee Aide): Could you state your name, please, for the record.

MR. SCHILLING: My name is Charles Schilling. I'm a member of the Fire Commission and Chairman of the Code Council, which was mentioned earlier. So we are the people that -- What should I say? -- try to coordinate the problems, and then present them to the Commission for some action.

But what would be a figure we have to come up with? That's similar to the Chairman asking, "How much it's going to cost?" We got some figures, but again, each building is different. Some have standpipes. Some don't. Some have nothing. Some have partial sprinklers. It's tough to say it's going to cost \$3 a square foot, and we've put many, many hours in on some of this research, when you don't exactly know which building is going to be involved.

And I understand what you're saying, but five years is a long time, I believe, for a retrofit program. I think that, even though you say you have only three months in your vacation time, some of that work could be done, I suppose, other times, besides while you were in session.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Well, if you're only considering high-rise buildings, I don't know how many high-rise buildings remain out there to be sprinklered.

MR. SCHILLING: No, I'm talking about your buildings. So you have no high-rise.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Okay. All of our high-rises are fully sprinklered. That is complete.

MR. SCHILLING: Okay.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Now we're dealing with buildings of four stories and below.

MR. SCHILLING: If we get to dormitories -- actually my high-rise package wouldn't cover them. It wouldn't cover the Seton Hall structure, unfortunately. But I believe now this will be one package, it will include dormitories and possibly any other life hazard structures, non-high-rise. We are trying to put these facts together.

As Bill Cane said earlier and Commissioner Naylis, this goes back to 1991. As a matter of fact, I pulled out the '91 subcommittee report recommending sprinklers in high-rises, so we haven't been asleep. The fire service is trying to-- It's not easy.

If you can give me no information on the other figures, but I believe that a five- to seven-year retrofit-- And if not, I believe that some concessions can be made. I believe if it took nine years for certain projects, then possibly come back to the Fire Division or whomever is handling the situation, and get a time extension.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Well, you may wish to consider--

MR. SCHILLING: But I can't see why-- We can't say time is-- Due to the fact that it's going to take-- We got to move. I mean, I have figures in here from firemen who have lost their lives, residents, tenants, Bergen had a fire, Philadelphia lost in fire. We have to move in some direction.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Well, you may wish to consider the same process that we utilized back when the retrofit provisions first came on board--

MR. SCHILLING: Yes, I was part of writing it. I understand what you're saying.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: --where we submitted the Facility Fire Protection Improvement Plan to the Division of Fire Safety--

MR. SCHILLING: Right.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: --well, it was then the Bureau of Fire Safety -- for their approval.

MR. SCHILLING: And I would say you've accomplished a great deal in that retrofit package. I don't want to prolong this.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: So possibly we should do it the same way with the sprinklers, rather than giving a number of years, maybe have the Division of Fire Safety be the agency that reviews the facility plan based on each facility's buildings.

MR. SCHILLING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

Anyone else? (no response)

These meetings -- I run them like everybody can ask questions. I don't believe to be that formal.

Mr. DeTrollo, got any comments?

DANIEL DeTROLIO: I do.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Well, make the comments. Sit down.

This is Danny DeTrollo. He's with the Fire Commission.

MR. DeTROLIO: I have a couple of comments. One of the things, I work for a -- probably New Jersey's largest developer. I won't say the name. All of our buildings are sprinklered. When it comes down to sprinklering buildings, there's no question about it, dollars-- Even under the Code, you do get a credit. You get a credit of 50 cents a square foot to sprinkler buildings. You've got to read the Code. It's in there. And your insurance companies are very generous with you.

I think it's a waste-- It took a tragedy called the Great Adventure fire to make the Fire Safety Commission promulgate a lot of new rules. Now, we have another tragedy at Seton Hall, and we have to get sprinklers in all the buildings. I don't know why we just -- change the rules, put the bills in, get the laws passed. The institutional building, dormitories -- sprinkler the damn things. It doesn't take long.

I have a question for you, Chief. You only work in the summertime? I mean, I build buildings 12 months a year. Now, logistically, you go to part of the building, you work on it.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Your buildings are empty. Nobody is in there when you're building them.

MR. DeTROLIO: Not all the time.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Well, most of the time they're empty buildings.

MR. DeTROLIO: But, well, so then they make a change. The cost of sprinklers -- we go to \$3 or \$4 -- you're in the general range even on new buildings, too. I think it should be extended to this new school construction budget's package that's going to be coming up pretty soon. High schools, grammar schools, all the way through, every building should be sprinklered. Some of my colleagues will say, "Well, houses, too," but not yet. When you have life-- You say, you have people living there. You have a school building that's used 12 hours a day -- not be -- 3:00 it doesn't empty out, and neither do the colleges.

So from a personal standpoint, business standpoint, I think we should just change the rules, change the codes. We've been studying this thing for a number of years on our Fire Safety Commission, our select commission. Let's just move forward. We don't need these tragedies.

And my last thing, Mr. Kelly, as Chairman of the Public Education Advisory Council, I find it hard to believe we can teach, through the schools -- 8-, 9-, 7-, 5-year-olds -- when the fire alarm goes off to disregard and just follow the rules. I think we should teach the college students and the high school students a little bit about fire safety and what happens when an alarm goes off. I think that's another matter, but we'll bring that up in Mr. Stanley's Education Committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: That has nothing to do with sprinkler systems.

MR. DeTROLIO: Why, yes it does, education.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: How long does Rutgers-- This is Rutgers, right? -- How long are you going to take to install sprinklers? If you had your druthers with, I guess, the 9500 beds, I guess, that's kind of a priority at this point to get those installed.

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: We really have not even estimated how long it would take to do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: What does it usually take-- How long does it usually take to install sprinklers in an existing building?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: The buildings that we have upgraded were all high-rise buildings, most six to eight stories in height, and it took the two full months during the summer to complete that work.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Okay. I guess your average building wouldn't take any longer than that -- wouldn't take any longer than two months?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: No. It would not take longer than that, presumably less.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Okay. So presumably, if there were a need, if there was a mandate, for lack of a different word, to install sprinklers in buildings where students are being housed, it could be done over the summer, and that wouldn't pose a tremendous hardship on any institution?

CHIEF ZUCCARELLO: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

No other questions? (no response)

I see a fireman in front of me. They spoke about the hoses being dried out. Isn't it true that the firemen bring their hose? They don't really trust those hoses that are in those buildings. In fact, they discourage even using the damn things. Isn't that true?

RICHARD BLOHM: That's correct, sir. We very rarely would utilize any of the hoses in any of these facilities, because they're not maintained properly. They may have debris in them. They don't necessarily provide the adequate water protection that the hose lines that will be carried by the fire department would.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Tell that young lady (referring to the Hearing Reporter) your full name, sir.

MR. BLOHM: My name is Richard Blohm.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I just wanted to straighten out that Seton Hall is no different than any other school. Most of those hoses aren't worth the material they're made with.

Go ahead.

MR. BLOHM: My name is Richard Blohm.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: Thank you.

MR. BLOHM: But since you have me up here, Mr. Chairman--
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: You better stick to sprinklers.

MR. BLOHM: I'm going to stick to sprinklers. It's disheartening to hear from a number of individuals here regarding the cost factor and the time element involved. I suspect, with the tragedy that occurred with these three families, that they would say that no cost could be put on their childrens'

lives. I sincerely hope that we're not here a few years from now, wrestling with this same problem and trying to explain to some additional families that the time element involved was too cumbersome for the higher education community to realize the protection that's necessary for the sprinkling of the buildings.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: John Paul Jones said, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead," and it's going to be full speed ahead with the sprinklers. I tell you that right now. Okay.

Anyone else want to testify? (no response)

No one out there? (no response)

Well, if that's so, this meeting is finished.

Thank you all for coming.

I still didn't get my figure. I wanted to know how much money we need, but we'll get it sooner or later.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)