

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ICB Fire Life Safety professionals give owners and tenants peace of mind**

The successful operations of HVAC fire life safety building systems could mean the difference between a nuisance fire and an uncontrollable catastrophe.

Take the Las Vegas MGM Grand fire of November 21, 1980 as an example. In that fire, 87 people perished and another 700 were injured. Had the smoke and fire dampers been properly inspected, so many lives may not have been lost as a result of smoke inhalation. This is why Sheet Metal Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) and Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association (SMACNA) have been working closely together to encourage its members to become ICB-Certified HVAC Fire Life Safety certified.

ICB-Certified professionals are properly and thoroughly trained to inspect, test, maintain, and repair fire and smoke dampers according to National Fire Protection Association Codes and Standards, helping to ensure that crucial safety features will work in an emergency.

“I can’t tell you the number of times I would encounter faulty fire dampers and tell the foreman, only to be told that this was an extremely common occurrence,” says Christopher Ruch, Director of Training National Energy Management Institute (NEMI), a not-for-profit organization jointly funded and managed by SMACNA and SMART. “To me, it didn’t make sense. My wife, my friends, my neighbors were working in these buildings, and just one weak link in the chain meant a wall was no longer fire resistant. Lives were at risk.”

The realities are that during an event such as a fire or other emergency that introduces pollutants into the air, HVAC ductwork can act as a “freeway,” circulating smoke and toxins throughout a structure, even to offices far away from the flashpoint. Worryingly, smoke and fire dampers experience a failure rate of up to 60 percent. The solution, however, is simple: Have built-in smoke and fire dampers properly inspected by a ICB-certified HVAC Fire Life Safety professional.

Unfortunately, Ruch’s experience is an all too common and under-publicized scenario for sheet metal workers. Surprisingly, however, very few states require an inspection from an ICB-certified HVAC professional. But all this is about to change.

“Increasingly, building operations managers are seeking to hire technicians who are certified to perform the inspection and testing of fire life safety systems,” explains Duane Smith, Director of Certification (ICB/TABB). “The ICB is the only certification body in the HVAC industry that provides fire life safety certifications.”

It’s not just the owners and developers who are realizing the benefits of hiring a certified professional to check their systems either; hospitals and universities across the country are increasingly calling on ICB-certified professionals and insurance companies are also being made aware of its importance.

“We’ve seen universities in New Mexico whose insurance companies now require it because of the legislation in the State,” explains Tony Kocurek, owner at Energy Balance & Integration LLC and Vice President on the SMACNA Executive Committee. “These insurance companies realize the risks and want to see the certification of the installers, not just the ones doing the testing. Eventually I think this will be nationwide.”

Currently, the International Fire Code is in use or adopted in 43 states, with the other seven states having even more stringent codes. Failure to comply with Code could void your insurance policy and leave you vulnerable to criminal violations, lawsuits and financial loss.

Being proactive rather than reactive will ensure buildings are meeting code, and could save money in the long run and help avoid the rush once legislation takes place nationwide.

“With the passage of legislation mandating the inspecting and testing of life safety components, the ICB certification is assurance to customers of the HVAC sheet metal industry of the quality advantages of utilizing persons or entities certified by the ICB and verification of competence required to do the job,” says Smith. “When customers hire ICB-certified professionals, they are assured those individuals are qualified to do the work.”

After all, as NEMIC says, “It’s a small price to pay for peace of mind. And it’s the law.”

For more information visit: <http://www.hvacfirelifesafety.org/site/public/content/index/home>

For information on ICB certification visit: <https://www.icbcertified.org/site/home/index.php>