



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Backgrounder 11-2

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Backgrounder: Why Local Building Codes Authorities Should Adopt the Leading National and Federal Fire Safety and Building Codes

Arlington, VA, May 11, 2011— The District of Columbia will soon consider amendments to the 2009 building code, an opportunity to improve life safety in commercial buildings by adopting the recently amended Section 1024 of the International Building Code (IBC) and Chapter 46 of the International Fire Code (IFC) that require the installation of photoluminescent (PL) egress path markings and Floor Identification Signs, along with many other Life Safety improvements. The Photoluminescent Safety Association (PSA), the trade association for the PL industry, supports the addition of the IBC and IFC language to the District's building code.

Four major code setting organizations have, since 2009, adopted changes to reflect their overwhelming support of the use of PL exit path markings and Floor Identification Signs:

- The IBC addresses fire prevention regarding building construction and design.
- The IFC addresses fire prevention regarding the operation of a completed and occupied building. In some cases they address similar issues, such as the use of PL products in emergency exit stairwells.
- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101 Life Safety Code requires PL exit markings. The NFPA creates and maintains minimum standards and requirements for fire prevention and suppression activities, training, and equipment, as well as other life-safety codes and standards. The NFPA codes are the defining document for fire marshals in numerous states.
- Since 2005 the General Services Administration also has been requiring PL exit path markings and Floor Identification Signs in all federal government buildings, whether new or

existing undergoing building modernization and alterations, exceeding 75 feet in height. This height requirement was again reinforced in the 2010 publication, giving federal employees a safer work environment in those GSA-operated buildings nationwide, including the District of Columbia. The GSA's requirement supersedes any locally adopted codes, which is why PL products are found in the Pentagon, Department of Defense installations, and many other government structures.

The IFC can require additional life safety items over and above the building department. A local fire chief or state fire marshal reviews the occupant use and safety, and inspects buildings for ongoing safety compliance. In other words, the fire marshal determines if the building is as safe today as it was when built. The fire marshal's office can also enforce the retrofit of structures based on emergence of new technologies deemed to promote life safety for the occupants, such as PL egress markings that are proven to increase the rate of building occupant evacuation during times of emergency, with or without building power being operational.

The fact that the IBC, IFC, NFPA, and GSA all support retrofitting structures with PL egress markings is significant and recognizes the value of PL products, especially if installed throughout the United States in a consistent manner. Uniformity, or consistency of installation, eliminates confusion to tenants, transient populations, children, and the elderly, and shows that these independent, mostly voluntary standards writing groups have reviewed the same life safety data and believe that it is important to include the same requirements for buildings in their areas of jurisdiction.

Photoluminescent, or glow-in-the-dark, products improve safety and reduce energy consumption through such products as exit signs, low-location egress pathway marking systems, and general safety signage. They are the environmentally responsible way to improve building safety because they use no power, do not use radioactive or other hazardous materials found in most other forms of exit signs, and last for many years with zero or low maintenance. PL safety markings may be easily installed.

The PSA is dedicated to generating broad-based acceptance of safety-grade photoluminescent products. Photoluminescent products improve safety through such products as exit signs, low-located egress pathway marking systems, and general safety signage.