

# CODES & STANDARDS®

Monthly digest of recent events in model codes and standards affecting design professionals, code officials and industry.

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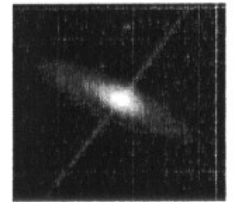


## THE BLACK HOLE OF LIFE SAFETY

RECENT EXAMPLES OF the disregard for life safety by those elected to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

JUSTICE TOOK ANOTHER blackeye when the defendants of the **E-2 nightclub** incident in Chicago left 21 dead. That was where a security guard sprayed Mace that went through the ventilation system and caused a panic. Over 1,100 occupants ran for the single main exit and were stacked at the street doorway. Those that died were smothered from the crowd pushing to get out. There was no fire or smoke. Just pure panic!

A COOK COUNTY judge acquitted a business owner, manager and promoter accused of involuntary manslaughter in the 2003 stampede at the Chicago nightclub (E-2) that killed 21 people. In his 13-page ruling, the Judge agreed with defense attorneys that prosecutors had not proven their case against the defendants, writing that the state failed to show the men played either a direct or indirect role in the tragedy. No direct role? Are you kidding? Were they making money that night the illegal club was operating? Were they not aware that the city had ordered them to stay closed? What about the lack of crowd management and overcrowding? The defendants did pay \$1.5 million to the families of those who lost their loved ones. I guess that makes everything O.K.



ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF political apathy, A state panel in **North Carolina**, acting against the pleas of the state fire marshal, has softened a rule on which buildings require sprinklers.

THE NORTH CAROLINA Building Code Council voted 8-4 to relax the new standard, which required sprinklers in new buildings where at least 100 people gather to eat or drink. Instead, the council voted to raise the standard to 300 people for buildings other than nightclubs, which it didn't define. Guess they never heard of The Station nightclub fire in Rhode Island. The same requirement from the *Life Safety Code (NFPA No. 101)* exempts fire sprinklers in assembly uses under 300. I guess the first 200 people are a expendable! And it's business as usual.....

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