

# “In Case of Fire, Use Stairs.” by Kimberly Paarlberg, R.A.

We have all seen this sign at elevators, but as we design and construct taller and taller buildings, is it still the best way to address emergency egress? What if you can't use the stairs because you have a mobility impairment, a heart problem or asthma? Elevators also serve to move emergency personnel and equipment closer to the fire floor. Are there preventative measures we should be taking to improve the safety of the fire fighters when they are using the elevators? These and other issues were discussed March 2–4 in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Workshop on Use of Elevators in Fires and Other Emergencies, which was sponsored by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) along with ICC, the National Institute of Standards and Technologies, the National Fire Protection Association, the U.S. Access Board, and the International Association of Fire Fighters.



The 120 workshop participants included firefighters, elevator manufacturers, and representatives from the design and construction industries, and papers were presented by authors from countries around the world including Canada, Japan, Europe and Australia.

The event was divided into two parts. For the first part, papers were presented that dealt with the utilization of elevators by emergency personnel. Participants then broke up into groups to discuss issues, goals and possible means of achieving those goals. The facilitator for each group then presented his or her team's conclusions to the meeting as a whole. The second part followed the same procedure, but addressed the use of elevators by building occupants during emergencies. Papers presented at the workshop and PowerPoint presentations created for the group discussions are available for review on ASME's web site at [www.asme.org/cns/elevators](http://www.asme.org/cns/elevators).

The March workshop marked the first time that firefighters and elevator manufacturers had met in a forum of this type. Participants indicated that they would like to stay involved in developing resolutions to the identified problems, and the ASME A17.1 Code Correlation Committee plans to propose recommended changes to the *Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators* and the model codes. ICC looks forward to facilitating progress towards these goals.

In an interesting side note, the workshop was held in the tallest hotel in the U.S., which also happens to be located adjacent to the site of the Winecoff Hotel—itself the tallest hotel in Georgia in 1946 when it was consumed by what is widely considered to be the deadliest hotel fire in North America. Thinking about the 119 people who lost their lives in that conflagration really brought home the importance of the issues at hand. ♦

