



# Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association Member Update

June 15, 2007

## Auditors Report Reveals Abysmal Enforcement of Fire and Life Safety in Schools by State Agency Fire Chiefs Continue to Express Concerns

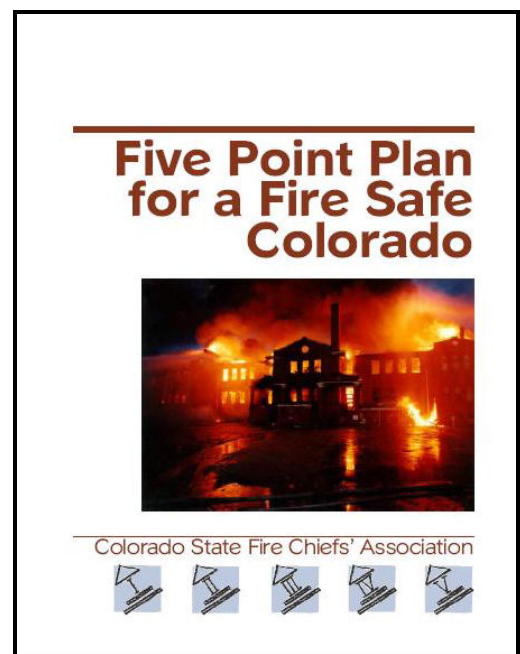
**CENTENNIAL**, June 13, 2007 – For years the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association (CSFCA) has repeatedly sounded the alarm that there was little or no enforcement of building and life safety codes in the construction or remodel of public schools in Colorado by the State Division of Oil and Public Safety. According to CSFCA President Douglas Forsman, "We have long maintained that this lax oversight was putting our children at risk," adding, "it is only by luck and chance that we haven't lost a child due to a fire or structural collapse in a school."

Thus, the report released Monday by the State Auditor's Office, which found the Division's record of enforcement nothing short of abysmal, comes as no surprise to the fire chiefs. Since publication of its "Five Point Plan for a Fire Safe Colorado" in 1997, the CSFCA has sought to transfer this function from the Division of Oil and Public Safety to the Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Public Safety.

The fire chiefs believe the enforcement of building and fire codes in public schools is a life safety function, best regulated by an office whose mission is life safety. The CSFCA has also long maintained that the authority to conduct plan reviews and inspections of public schools should be delegated to local authorities that have qualified building and fire inspectors. "It is the local fire department that will be called when the school is on fire," says Chief Forsman, "and we will be the ones held to answer if a child loses his or her life. It only makes sense that we should be the ones ensuring that the schools in our jurisdictions are safe." According to Forsman, "The state should be involved only in adopting the codes and standards, and enforcing them in areas of the state where there are no qualified local inspectors."

The CSFCA made two recent attempts in the legislature to address this issue, but our concerns were largely ignored.

In 2005, the CSFCA sought to transfer all of the public safety programs, which included school safety, boiler inspections, carnivals and amusement parks, and explosives from the Department of Labor and



Since 1997, the CSFCA has sought to transfer the public safety programs of the Department of Labor to the Department of Public Safety in the interest of administrative efficiency and program effectiveness.

-- continued on page 2