

# Washington Memo

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## ✓ SPI Urges Congress to Fund Center for Fire Research

SPI urged Congress to continue funding the Center for Fire Research (CFR) despite the Administration's recommendation to eliminate the Center. SPI provided its comments to House Science, Research and Technology Subcommittee Chairman Doug Walgren (D-PA) March 11. SPI contends that the Center's work could not be easily replicated in the private sector and noted that the Agency's Director essentially admitted that the Center's projects would not be resumed in the private sector if the Center was terminated.

SPI also expressed its concern about the prospect of the Center being phased-out at this time because of the ongoing fire research in fire hazard assessment which, when finished, could make major contributions to public health and safety. SPI added that the fire hazard assessment and its longer-range companion, fire risk assessment, hold much promise for the future design of more fire safe structures and furnishings. SPI intends to testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space April 15 supporting the reauthorization of the National Bureau of Standards (NBS), including the CFR, for fiscal year 1987.

In a related matter, SPI and B.F. Goodrich representatives met with Deputy Secretary of Commerce Clarence Brown February 27 to discuss the Administration's opposition to continued funding for the CFR and to present industry's position that the Center should be kept viable. The group also explored various options in the event Congress concurs with the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Center.

### SPI Representative Testifies Against Oil Import Tax

Ronald Wishart, Vice President, Union Carbide, expressed the strong opposition of SPI and other chemical and petrochemical groups to an oil import tax before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittees on Energy Conservation and Power and on Fossils and Synthetic Fuels on March 13. Mr. Wishart testified on behalf of the Petrochemical Energy Group, the Man-Made Fiber Producers Association and the Chemical Manufacturers Association in addition to SPI.

The hearings were the first held by a House subcommittee panel since the issue has become a hot topic in Washington again. The SPI representative presented comments similar to those he presented on behalf of the same organizations before the Senate Finance Committee on February 28. He highlighted such concerns as the competitive disadvantage at which an oil import tax would place domestic manufacturers against foreign imports as well as in foreign markets. He emphasized that oil

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**SPI**

PRESIDENT'S

**REPORT**

TO THE MEMBERS

October, 1985

- **Quick Media Response Blunts Fire Fighters' Attack on Plastics**
- **SPI Court Victory For Milk Containers Sparks Counterclaim**
- **PR Committee Reorganized, Expanded**
- **SPI-Sponsored Seminars Fill Industry Need**
- **Fire Safety Film Valuable Resource on Complex Subject**
- **TV Video Release Helps Support National Fire Prevention Week**

# Combustibility Debate Demands United Response

Debate over the combustibility of plastics products is nothing new. It has been around for decades. What is new is the increasing frequency and intensity of attacks questioning the safety of our products in the fire environment.

Because plastic materials so permeate our everyday lifestyles, and their use in new ways is ever-expanding, fires invariably involve our industry's products to some extent. For this reason, we have devoted millions of dollars over the years to fire safety research as well as educational programs.

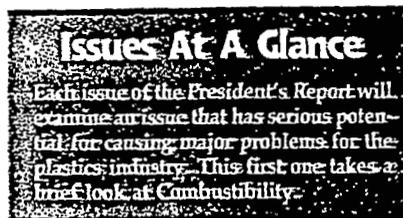
Certain segments of the fire service have singled out plastics in their charges that today's fires are hotter and more lethal. To help dispel misinformation, SPI has provided much useful information to the fire/safety community in the form of printed materials and audio/visual presentations.

While many members of the fire/safety community have carried on this dialogue with a relatively open mind, the International Association of Fire Fighters (a union) has escalated its criticisms this past summer.

IAFF's increased visibility in this debate coincides with renewed attempts by Atcor, Inc., to use the com-

combustibility debate for marketing purposes.

The plastics industry has been aware for a number of years that Atcor, a manufacturer of metal pipe and conduit, actively and financially supports efforts to present plastics as a fire hazard. These activities, undertaken under the guise of public safety, are in reality aimed at regaining markets lost to plastic pipe and conduit. More than two years ago Fortune Magazine reported the story under the headline: "The Dubious War on Plastic Pipe."



Recently, Atcor largely bankrolled the production of a film produced with the Union and called "The Burning Issue." SPI considers the film so flawed and misleading, as well as anti-competitive, that the Society has asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate the matter and to bar further distribution of the film or to require that it be modified

to take away its false and misleading elements. The film advocates the mandating of a particular small-scale combustion toxicity test as a means of determining whether a product should be approved for use as a construction material. At the same time, the film attributes the deaths in several highly publicized fires (MGM Grand Hotel and Beverly Hills Supper Club) to toxic fumes from burning plastics.

The international union has successfully encouraged local Fire Fighter unions over the past year to get legislators in numerous states to introduce bills requiring toxicity testing of materials and products. And, the international has vowed to carry the battle to all 50 states.

## Impact on the Plastics Industry

While polyurethane and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) products have borne the brunt of attacks in the past, and PVC continues to be the primary target of the IAFF, recent events attempt to indict all plastics products in one fell swoop. As such, the entire plastics industry must actively defend itself in the combustibility debate. No longer is it the "other guy's battle."

In New York State, regulators are moving to proposed mandatory testing of building products and some furnishings to establish a toxicity data bank. If fully implemented in that state, the law will require manufacturers to have their products tested for toxicity using the University of Pittsburgh test and then file the data with New York's secretary of state. This is de facto regulation and may be a precursor of bans on some plastics.

SPI believes — and is supported by third-party scientists as well as members of the fire/safety community — that (1) no reliable small-scale com-

## Fire Service Instructor's Position on Toxicity Testing

The International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI) has taken a position on the issue of toxicity that closely parallels that of SPI. The SFS Society's Board of Directors recently issued a public statement acknowledging that:

All materials, be they natural or synthetic, will produce lethal and debilitating toxic products in a fire environment;

A proactive prevention program which includes ignition resistance, rapid detection, early warnings, quick-action sprinklers, and pre-planned emergency escape training must be universally accepted and implemented;

Data banks of material toxicity characteristics can only be successful if the

relative and quantitative categories used are such they they would have meaningful values that can be applied by local, state and national offices as well as the public.

Cited as part of the ISFSI Board's position statement was Dr. Jack Snell's National Fire Protection Association/National Bureau of Standards report which states that "available toxicity test methods . . . are suitable now only for use as a screening tool by product developers and researchers for early identification of potentially troublesome products or materials" and that "it would be premature now to launch substantial efforts to compile acute inhalation toxicity data on large numbers of materials and products."

bustion toxicity test now exists and (2) that such tests alone do not provide adequate measures for making life-safety decisions. Other factors such as flammability, rate of flame spread, ignition temperature and smoke generation must be considered, too.

Furthermore, the existence of faulty data from such tests could create a liability nightmare, particularly for architects, specifiers, and material suppliers.

Other concerns about the implementation of such testing procedures include the economic costs — likely to run into the hundreds of millions of dollars. That would be a burden carried by the end-use manufacturer.

### What Is SPI Doing on This Issue?

As noted earlier, the Society has asked the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to review "The Burning Issue" for possible violations of the FTC Act. Also, early in 1985, SPI notified broadcasters of the one-sided nature of the film, advising them that airing it would require that they telecast all sides of the issue under the "Fairness Doctrine" of the Communications Act. That action prompted the media to disclose Atcor's funding of the film and has led to invitations permitting the plastics industry's views to be heard.

Intensive educational efforts are continuing with officials in states considering such legislation in an effort to point out the fallacies of the IAFF's arguments. Among the educational tools used is SPI's new film, "Fire Safety In America."

Dialogues are on-going with the fire/safety community to bring to their attention other credible sources of information on the issue.

And SPI sponsors fire safety research as well as public education efforts to inform consumers about how to protect their homes and lives.

(For additional details on this issue, please contact the SPI Public Relations Department in Washington for a packet of appropriate information.)

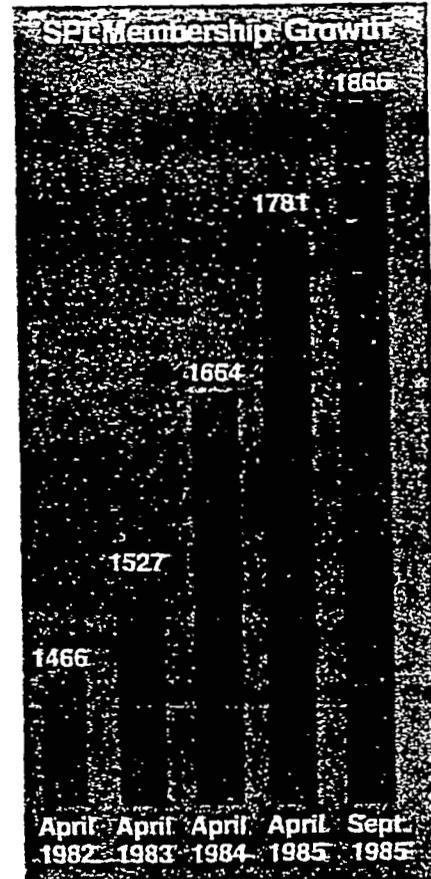
## Membership Up; Telemarketing Response Excellent

Our membership department reports very encouraging results on the first leg of its telemarketing project — the latest step in its continuing, aggressive membership recruitment program.

Telemarketing, Inc., the Quincy, Massachusetts firm chosen to work on the project, had a hefty 43% positive response to its first mailing to prospective members. Telemarketing says it normally gets a 10-20% response to this type of contact, which underscores the excellent interest we've drawn.

The telemarketing campaign seeks to assess the awareness of member prospects of the importance of a strong industry trade association. The extremely high positive response confirms SPI as that association.

Further confirmation lies in SPI's record growth in new members. Overall, SPI's membership count has grown 25% in the past five years.



## Highlights From the Divisions

This sampling of activities from the Operating Units demonstrates the diverse services provided under the SPI umbrella:

The Vinyl Siding Institute, which is working with the International Conference of Building Officials on several code changes, releases two new publications, an *Applications Manual* and *Moisture in the Home* ... A technical handbook is being developed by the *Thermoforming Institute*, and the *Vinyl Window and Door Institute* has three new publications, *Window Condensation*, *Certification* and *Membership* ...

Reinforced Plastics/Composites Institute approves a supplementary public relations program which includes publication of a new magazine and a resource directory ... *Polyurethane Division* is developing a new promotional program

on 100% foam mattresses ... *Committee on Resin Statistics* introduces a new membership promotional brochure ... 1985 Annual Labor Survey conducted by the *Financial Management Committee* ...

*Plastic Drum Institute* unveils 12-minute promotional film ... *Machinery Division* sponsors product liability seminar ... the *Vinyl Institute* is participating in a combustion/emissions research project involving the incineration of municipal solid waste...

*Profile Extruders Division* completes its annual surveys of operating ratios ... A slide presentation featuring the advantages of plastic microwave cookware is being prepared by the *Microwave Oven Cookware Division* ... *Phenolic Molding Division* prepares a three-color promotional folder.



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Philip S. Schaenman  
President

February 24, 1987

MEMORANDUM: Peter Sparber  
Susan Stuntz  
✓ Lisa Osborne  
The Tobacco Institute

FROM: Barbara Lundquist *BL*

SUBJECT: State Fire Chiefs Associations

Here are the upcoming major meetings of 30 state fire chiefs associations, including the significant states. Some associations do not yet have firm meeting locations and dates, as noted. IAFC's current list of state association presidents and/or representatives is also attached.

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