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Lightning Protection Institute Joins State Fire Marshals in Effort to Reduce Fire Risk Present in Millions of U.S. Homes

Effort calls for improved performance standards for CSST

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MARYVILLE, Mo., Sept. 9, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Lightning Protection Institute (LPI) is joining forces with the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) to improve safety measures connected with a fire risk lurking in many homes across the country. The combination of a single lightning strike and the presence of a common gas piping, known as corrugated stainless steel tubing (CSST), can pose a serious fire hazard. Fire safety officials believe millions of U.S. homes could be at risk.

Due to its flexible nature and ease of installation, CSST has been widely-used for residential gas service lines since its introduction in the 1990's. Unfortunately, unlike traditional heavier walled gas pipe, the corrugated design and the thin walls of CSST have proved problematic and susceptible to lightning's high intensity electric charge. Lightning energies can perforate holes in the CSST and allow gas leakage and fire. In worst case scenarios, such leaks have led to devastating home fires.

"Hazardous outcomes with CSST have already prompted a class action settlement, law suits, a NFPA review and a public awareness campaign," said Bud VanSickle, LPI executive director. "As a nationwide group dedicated to lightning safety and lightning protection, LPI supports NASFM's efforts with the codes and standards community to raise the lightning test within the CSST product standard."

According to NASFM, its recent work with CSST manufacturers and stakeholders in promoting the "Yellow CSST Safety Campaign" has reached over 30 million homeowners. The campaign created safety alerts inserted in utility notices and insurance policyholder communications across the country to educate consumers about bonding and grounding guidelines for CSST; remediation which may not have been addressed when the product was installed. While bonding of the yellow CSST makes homes safer, NASFM is petitioning the codes and standards community for more improvements.

"Raising the ANSI LC1 product standard to require greater immunity of CSST from the lightning threat is imperative for greater safety going forward in new construction," said Jim Narva, executive director of the NASFM. "We believe LPI's leadership position in the lightning protection industry can increase awareness and encourage support for improvements to the performance standard for the product."

"With the advent of a more significant lightning testing protocol (ICC-ES PMG LC1027) and the current technology for products that can meet the enhanced test requirements, CSST's vulnerability to lightning will be greatly decreased if performance criteria is increased," said Mitchell Guthrie, former Chair of NFPA 780 and current Chair of the International Electrotechnical Commission's Technical Committee on Lightning Protection. Guthrie served on the NFPA Standards Council CSST Task Group and on the Fire Protection Research Foundation Project Technical Panel addressing installation methods for CSST gas piping.

"A safer product is available, so there is little justification to the public not to require the enhanced performance criteria in our national standards," explained Guthrie. "It's certainly beneficial to have LPI provide technical support to help achieve the goal."

"As LPI moves forward to support these efforts, it's important to remind the public that proper bonding and grounding of internal building systems is just one element of a complete lightning protection system," added VanSickle.

About NASFM

The National Association of State Fire Marshals comprised of senior fire officials in the U.S. and their top deputies. Its primary mission is to protect human life, property and the environment from fire and related hazards. A secondary mission of NASFM is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Fire Marshal's operations. Visit the NASFM website at <http://www.firemarshals.org/> (<http://www.firemarshals.org/>) for more information.

About LPI

The Lightning Protection Institute is a not-for-profit, nationwide group founded in 1955 to promote lightning safety, awareness and education and is a leading resource for lightning protection and system requirements. Visit the LPI website at <http://lightning.org/> (<http://lightning.org/>) for information about lightning protection system requirements and how to locate a LPI-certified installer in your area. See <http://lightning.org/resources/overview-of-csst-lightning-hazard/> (<http://lightning.org/resources/overview-of-csst-lightning-hazard/>) for more information about CSST and the lightning risk.

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