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MEDIA RELEASE

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Branson Firefighters Urge Caution as Temperatures Plummet

Sub-Freezing Temperatures are predicted over the next week in the Branson Community. With this in mind, the City of Branson Fire Department reminds area commercial business owners to insure minimum heat is maintained throughout buildings protected with an automatic fire sprinkler system.

Commercial properties across the city including shopping centers, motels and hotels, along with condominiums, and other area attractions are typically protected by automatic fire sprinkler systems. These systems are installed for life safety purposes with a focus on protecting evacuation routes as well as property conservation as fire sprinkler systems are designed to extinguish small fires before they have a chance to rage out of control. In fact, national statistics show that almost 95% of the fires in protected buildings are extinguished with one to three sprinkler heads activated.

However, if a system is allowed to freeze, devastating consequences may occur. "If a building is closed and the heat turned off, a fire sprinkler system will freeze up... especially if we experience sub-freezing temperatures for two or three days in a row," stated Fire Chief Ted Martin. "If a fire does occur, the sprinkler system may not operate properly due to ice build-up in the system. The most common occurrence though is a fracture in the supply piping due to the expanding water as it freezes, which in turn may cause devastating water damage," added Martin. Even if temperatures plummet for a couple of days and no pipes break, sprinkler systems have also failed as the temperatures rise, causing fractures in the pipe.

"This is the time of year that we encourage property owners to inspect their attic areas to insure that there are no exposed pipes, and that all areas of the building are maintained with minimal heat of 45 to 50 degrees. This will also allow for radiant heat to be throughout the building and help prevent the system from freezing, especially as several Branson businesses and attractions close for the holidays or for a short break over the months of January and February, for example." added Martin.

For more information about fire sprinkler systems and their maintenance, contact the fire department by calling (417) 337-8580.

As temperatures remain at or below freezing for two to three days (or longer), fire sprinkler systems become jeopardized as they become subject to freezing... especially in the commercial businesses that are closed for the tourism season. Now is the time to insure minimum heat is maintained in all properties protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system to avoid a costly accidental freezing / water damage event.