



## **State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association Responds to Concern Over Black Fire Hydrants**

AUSTIN, Texas, September 18, 2007—During the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the House and Senate passed H.B. 1717 to aid in the identification of non-functioning fire hydrants and assist fire fighters in responding to fires in a timely manner.

“Over the years, fire fighters have become increasingly concerned, especially in rural areas, that non-functioning fire hydrants are preventing us from protecting homes and businesses from fire,” said Chris Barron, Executive Director of the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association. “Too many times, we lose houses and businesses because when we arrive at the scene and hook up to the hydrant, there is no water.”

The legislation requires fire hydrants that are non-functioning or otherwise unavailable for fire suppression use to be painted black. A device is considered non-functioning if it pumps less than 250 gallons of water per minute. This is a minimum requirement based on uniform standards adopted by the National Fire Protection Association and used across the country.

Unfortunately, some water utilities in Smith County have over-reacted to the legislation by painting all fire hydrants black, most of which are functioning hydrants that pump well over 250gpm. “The utilities are painting all hydrants black to protect against liability,” said, Cody Crawford, Fire Chief of Chapel Hill Fire Department. “While this makes sense to the lawyers, it doesn't make good common sense and it puts homeowners at risk. In my view, it creates more liability than it removes.”

In Texas, water utilities are not required to provide water flow for fire suppression. So while homeowners may think they are protected because they have a hydrant on the corner of the street, it may be providing a false sense of security and nothing more.

“SFFMA commends the authors of the bill and the legislators who supported it for their efforts to protect homeowners and businesses by helping fire fighters know which hydrants are functioning and which are not,” said Chris Barron. “We encourage water utilities across the state to assist us in implementing this common sense approach to safety.”

The State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association is the oldest and largest fire service association in Texas with approximately 19,000 members. SFFMA provides certification for volunteer fire fighters and departments across the state and sponsors the world's largest fire school at Texas A&M University.