

Fire Safety at the proposed 708 Church St Tower
(Information provided by Fire Chief Berkowsky)

For very tall buildings, such as the proposed tower at 708 Church St, firefighting on upper stories depends upon redundancies of the systems within the building to support firefighting operations. An aerial ladder's (105 foot) effectiveness is limited to the 7th floor of any building. The most critical component is firefighters for a high-rise incident. The number of firefighters available to respond to the onset of a high-rise fire will have the greatest impact in the mitigation of the event. In Chicago, their initial response to a high-rise incident is 61 firefighters. In Evanston, the most we can send on the initial response is 26 firefighters on any given day.

A working elevator is critical. Standard elevators typically fail within 20 minutes of a working structure fire. A new device called a "robust elevator" has been developed for the fire service, and the Evanston Fire Department requests that the building include this type of facility to increase the probability that upper story fires can be reached safely by fire department personnel.

Also critically important is that both water and power are at hand if such an event were to occur. This can be assisted by providing redundancy in the building's water and power systems, and by providing "zone pumps" throughout the building. The Fire Department also requests that there be sufficient redundancy in water and power systems, as well as zone pumps, specified in the building's design.