INTERPRETIVE MEMORANDUM .2001 - 10

To:  Licensed Architects  
     Licensed Engineers  
     Licensed Sprinkler Contractors  
     Licensed Fire Alarm Contractors  
     Licensed Fire Suppression Contractors  
     Felicia Cooper, Administrator - Inspections  
     Stephen Gogreva, Manager  
     Boyd Petty, Manager  
     Pat Day, Supervisor of Health Care Inspections  
     Plan Review Staff

From:  Jean Carter, Architect Supervisor  
        Henry Reed, Architect Supervisor  
        Don Zeringue, Architect Supervisor  
        Fidel Fremin, Architect Supervisor

Approved:  Mark Gates,  
            Deputy Assistant Secretary/Chief Architect

Date:  November 30, 2001

Re:  Baptismal Fonts

Church baptismal fonts/full immersion baptismal tanks are not specifically exempt to NFPA 101:7.2 means of egress requirements.

This office observes that the baptismal ceremony is characterized by the following conditions:

1. Personal assistance given to users by attending minister or helpers.
2. Low occupant load in vicinity of baptismal area.
3. Many baptismal tanks are pre-fabricated units
4. Many full immersion tanks are elevated behind the altar/platform and accessed by stairs.
5. The congregation observes the baptism.

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These conditions lead this office to modify/clarify church baptismal space means of egress requirements in the following manner:

A. This office will not cite means of egress requirements for entrances down into the water of full immersion baptismal tanks.
B. The stairs leading to an elevated immersion tank shall comply with all NFPA 101:7.2 requirements applicable to mezzanine stairs. Landings will be required at the top and bottom of stairs leading to elevated baptismal tanks.
C. Landing guards will not be required on the spectator side of elevated full immersion baptismal tanks.
D. Stairs leading to small sculptural baptismal fonts shall comply with applicable stair dimensions. Guards and handrails will be required for stairs having three (3) or more risers.