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Telgian Mourns the Passing of Founder William J. Tomes, Visionary Leader in Fire Protection

(Encinitas, CA - September 8, 2025) - It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of William (Bill) J. Tomes of Encinitas, California, who died on August 30, 2025, at the age of 83. He leaves behind family, friends, and colleagues who will forever remember his remarkable life, career, and contributions to the fire protection industry.

Bill Tomes began his career as a firefighter in 1964. After retiring as Fire Marshal of the City of San Diego in 1985, he launched a second career as Founder and CEO of Tomes and Associates, which became the foundation of what is today Telgian Holdings, Inc. In 1988, he co-founded Tomes, Van Rickley & Associates (TVA), providing fire and life safety consulting services for businesses and government agencies, including code interpretation, risk analysis, hazard evaluation, plan review, fire sprinkler system design, and industry training.

“Bill Tomes had a profound impact on the careers and lives of many in the fire and life safety profession,” said Russ Leavitt, Executive Chair of Telgian Holdings, Inc. Leavitt continued, “He was instrumental in the development of current industry leaders, including company executive officers, association leaders, and fire service professionals. He shared with everyone his passion for the mission of saving lives and protecting property. He will be missed by all who knew and worked alongside him.”

From 1992 to 2002, Tomes served as Chairman of the Board and CEO of TVA Fire and Life Safety, leading the company to international recognition as a market leader in applying emerging fire protection technologies. In 2007, the Telgian brand was formed to more accurately reflect the diversity of the company’s many and varied fire, life safety, and security services. The word “Telgian” is, in fact, derived from Old English and means “to branch out and grow.” Tomes later served as Chairman Emeritus of Telgian Holdings, Inc. until his retirement in 2023.

Throughout his career, Bill Tomes also served on numerous fire protection, life safety, and hazardous materials committees, authored articles for leading fire protection publications, and taught seminars nationwide. He was a past President of the California Fire Marshals Association and the San Diego Society for Fire Protection Engineers. For eight years, he taught at the National Fire Academy, instructing courses in fire prevention and fire/building codes.

His son, James Tomes, CEO of Telgian, shared: “My father was not only a pioneer in fire protection, but also a mentor, teacher, and visionary who inspired countless professionals in our industry. Telgian’s very foundation is rooted in his values, and we honor him by carrying forward the mission he started four decades ago. His influence will continue to guide Telgian’s future, just as it has shaped its past.”

William J. Tomes will be remembered as a trailblazer whose dedication transformed fire protection practices and whose influence endures through the company he founded and the many lives he touched.

About Telgian

Since 1985, Telgian has grown from a modest firm, providing code development and consulting, fire testing and fire investigation, to an international company with more than 350 employees and a roster of fire protection, engineering and design, life safety and security services. Presently, the firm counts many of the world's most recognizable corporations as its clients.

The company was founded on the principles of integrity, honesty, and respect, along with attributes such as innovation, creativity, and a pride in one's work, as well as an unwavering dedication to customer service. This quickly attracted industry-leading experts from around the world, resulting in rapid growth and expansion.

A wide-ranging menu of services also grew to include fire and life safety consulting for business and government agencies, fire and building code interpretation, risk analysis and hazard evaluation, fire and building plan review, fire sprinkler system design, and industry training.

Today, Telgian is comprised of two business divisions, each with a unique focus, that efficiently serve an increasing range of industries. Telgian Fire Safety (TFS) serves approximately 50,000 locations annually for the inspection, testing, and repair of fire and life safety systems. Telgian Engineering & Consulting (TEC) is a full-service engineering and risk mitigation company specializing in complex, multi-discipline projects related to the protection of people, property, and information against preventable losses.