

American Homes Are One Step Closer to Being Safer from the Devastation of Fire
International Building Code Hearings Result in a Vote Reaffirming Mandatory Residential Fire Sprinklers in New Construction

PATTERSON, N.Y. (October 28, 2009) – American homes are one step closer to being more fire-safe, following the 8:45 PM October 28 vote during the International Residential Code (IRC) hearings conducted by the International Code Council (ICC) in Baltimore, MD. The vote confirmed, by the IRC Committee, by a 7-4 margin and overwhelmingly supported by the 1,650 credentialed ICC member voters reaffirmed that previously accepted national building codes will make it mandatory for all new one- and two- family dwellings to have residential fire sprinklers starting in 2011 by state or local adoption.

Currently, 44 states are in various stages of legislation to adopt the ICC's International Residential Code (IRC), the national building code which includes the fire sprinkler requirement. This requirement was in danger of being removed from the 2012 code and was subject to this vote.

With this win, residential fire sprinkler requirements have progressed to becoming a standard fire safety addition to homes. This initiative has the potential to vastly reduce the 3,000 yearly fire deaths in the U.S., as well as significantly reduce serious injury and property damage.

Working together, fire sprinkler supporters united to show that mandatory fire “Over a 30-year mortgage, that’s less than the price of a cup of latte' per week! That’s a small price to pay to save the lives of your loved ones in the event of a fire. This is a big win for the fire service and American's where they live. In order to reduce this country’s fire problem, it must be attacked where fires happen the most, which is in the home,” said John Viniello, president of the National Fire Sprinkler Association.

The IRC is the model code that is adopted in 46 states as the basic building code for new homes. Following code hearings, the IRC must be adopted at the state level. Residential fire sprinkler ordinances already exist in municipalities throughout 34 states.

The inclusion of residential fire sprinklers for one- and-two-family dwellings is a response to the growing fire problem in the U.S. About 85 percent of all fires occur in the home, fueled by new lightweight construction and more flammable home contents. In fact, the new sprinkler regulations have been endorsed by fire service professionals across the country, including the NFPA, U.S. Fire Administration, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and the International Association of Firefighters.

Groups such as these agree smoke detectors are no longer enough in residential fire protection, as the time to escape a house fire has dwindled from 17 minutes 20 years ago to three minutes today, and this poses a severe risk to those who cannot self-evacuate or have mobility concerns.

NFSA joined forces with the International Residential Code Fire Sprinkler Coalition – a large alliance of fire service professional organizations, including fire chiefs and fire marshals, fire code associations, and citizen advocacy groups – through educating and canvassing ICC members to vote for the code change.

“This is not a one-person or one-organization victory,” added Viniello. “We are grateful to the ICC for implementing a process that allows for the call for change to be heard and provides a forum for change to take place. In addition, we thank the International Residential Code Fire Sprinkler Coalition for joining so many organizations together to bring us to victory.”

Thanks to all who have ventured into this arena to make America a more "fire-safe" community! This was an amazing display of fire safety support from a variety of organizations; the NFPA, US Fire Administration, International Fire Chiefs Association, Habitat for Humanity-Austin, Texas and the International Association of Fire Fighters . The committee strongly backed what the future home owner can expect in maximum fire safety.