

JEFFERSON CITY | All nursing homes and other long-term care facilities in Missouri would be required to install fire sprinklers under a bill that received initial House approval Wednesday.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Kevin Wilson, a Neosho Republican, follows a fire in November at an Anderson group home that killed 10 residents and one employee. The facility had working fire alarms but no sprinklers.

“This is in direct response to 11 people losing their lives in a facility that wasn’t safe,” Wilson said.

Under current law, sprinklers are required for all facilities licensed after 2000. The Anderson home was first licensed before the current sprinkler requirement was adopted, so it was grandfathered in.

Long-term care facilities include nursing homes, facilities for the mentally ill and mentally disabled, and assisted living centers.

The bill would require that after Aug. 28, new or expanded facilities must install sprinkler systems. But existing long-term care centers would have until 2015 to install them. The bill also allows the Department of Health and Senior Services to require that long-term care facilities have staff overnight — awake, dressed and ready to help residents evacuate the building.

Wilson had proposed giving long-term care facilities until 2019 to install sprinkler systems, but Democrats successfully added an amendment to move up the deadline by four years.