



Pennsylvania Adopts Statewide Requirement that All New One- and Two-Family Homes and Townhouses Have Life-Saving Fire Sprinkler Systems

PATTERSON, N.Y. (December 15, 2009) – The National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA), the longest-tenured fire sprinkler advocacy organization in the U.S., announces that Pennsylvania will require all newly constructed townhouses to contain a residential fire sprinkler system starting January 1, 2010 and in all newly constructed one- and two-family homes effective January 1, 2011.

By approving regulation #12-89, Pennsylvania adopts the 2009 International Residential Code (IRC), which is the country's primary building code. This regulation adopting the IRC and its residential fire sprinkler requirements was approved by the Pennsylvania Independent Review Commission in a vote on December 10, 2009. This adoption of the IRC updates the Uniform Construction Code in the state.

“This is a tremendous victory for the residents and fire service professionals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and I want to applaud the members of the Independent Review Commission for realizing the importance of this regulation,” said NFSA President John Viniello. “By adopting the 2009 ICC building code and requiring fire sprinklers in all newly constructed one- and two-family homes as well as townhouses, Pennsylvania is raising the bar in fire safety and demonstrating that the commonwealth cares about its residents and emergency responders by making this important life safety measure a requirement. Pennsylvania will now serve as a model for other states, which are currently in various stages of adopting the 2009 ICC building codes.”

The inclusion of residential fire sprinkler requirements in the 2009 International Code Council's (ICC) IRC is a response to the growing fire problem in the U.S. About 85 percent of all fires occur in the home and many are fueled by new “lightweight” construction and more flammable home contents. 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. This poses a severe risk to firefighters as they now have less time to do their job and save residents' lives and property.

“The entire fire services industry fought a tough battle in Pennsylvania. They would not have been successful without the help of each and every individual who supported this cause, including John Waters and Tim Knisely – who are Co-Chairs of the Pennsylvania Residential Fire Sprinkler Coalition – and Ed Mann, the Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner,” said Ray Lonabaugh, NFSA Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager.

The residential sprinkler requirement was voted into the ICC's IRC in September 2008 by building code officials from all over the U.S., gaining more than two-thirds of the vote. This demonstrated that officials very clearly see the need to require sprinkler technology as a life-saving measure. The fire sprinkler requirement was recently reaffirmed at an ICC vote in Baltimore in late October 2009.

About the National Fire Sprinkler Association

Established in 1905, the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) is the voice of the fire sprinkler industry. NFSA leads the drive to get life-saving fire sprinklers into all buildings; provides support and resources for its members – fire sprinkler contractors, manufacturers and suppliers; and educates authorities having jurisdiction of fire control matters. Headquartered in Patterson, N.Y., NFSA has regional operations offices throughout the country. www.nfsa.org.

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