From: IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition
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Subject: Fire Sprinkler Requirements to be Included in 2012 IRC
Date: Tuesday, March 16, 2010 6:50:44 AM

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2012 International Residential Code
Will Retain Fire Sprinklers for New Homes
- No Debate at Dallas ICC Hearing -

WASHINGTON, DC - March 16, 2010

The final action hearing agenda for the 2012 International Residential Code (IRC) has been released by the International Code Council (ICC), and we are pleased to report that there were no public comments challenging code requirements for residential fire sprinklers. Accordingly, under ICC regulations, requirements for residential sprinklers will not be subject to debate at ICC's final action hearing in Dallas in May. Instead, proposals to rescind sprinkler requirements from the IRC will be automatically disapproved, without discussion, as part of a consent agenda.

ICC's membership has spoken very clearly on the issue of residential fire sprinklers, implementing requirements using a gradual and measured approach over a period of more than 20 years. ICC's legacy organizations began requiring fire sprinklers in multifamily occupancies in the 1980s. Those requirements were extended to single family homes in 2006 via an optional IRC appendix, and in 2008, ICC members approved fire sprinklers as a standard feature to be included in all new homes. That action was upheld on appeal and was then reaffirmed last year by the ICC code development committee that oversees the IRC. In the latter vote, EVERY member of the code development committee, other than the four who were appointed by the National Association of Home Builders, voted in favor of residential sprinklers, and that vote was then ratified by a vote of ICC members in attendance at the hearing.

"The true beneficiary of this great news is the American public," said Chief Ronny J. Coleman, president of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition and former fire marshal for the State of California. "Model code requirements establishing fire sprinklers as a standard feature in new homes are clearly here to stay, and that accomplishment, earned through the courage and commitment of our nation's building and fire-safety professionals, will save lives, prevent injuries and reduce property damage associated with residential fires."

The 2009 IRC, including the fire sprinkler requirement, has been adopted in California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, South Carolina and New Hampshire, and the code has cleared administrative adoption hurdles in New Jersey. However, home builder associations (HBAs) in these and other states, with the exception of California where the building industry association supported residential sprinklers, have pulled out all stops in an effort to block adoption of the IRC sprinkler provisions.

"HBAs across the country are literally throwing temper tantrums," said Jeffrey Shapiro, Executive Director of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition when asked to describe what's happening with IRC adoptions in many states. "HBAs have largely controlled building codes affecting new home construction for decades, and they clearly don't like the idea of public safety officials stepping in and exerting authority over their industry. Nevertheless, we are pleased to see public safety trumping politics in a growing number of states."

One issue that may ultimately shift the perspective of builders towards residential fire sprinklers is legal liability. Regardless of whether a state or locality chooses to amend fire sprinkler requirements out of the IRC, courts may well hold that it is incumbent upon builders to follow established standards of care for fire safety when they construct a new home. With EVERY national code (including the 2012 IRC) now requiring EVERY new residential property to be equipped with fire sprinklers, that standard of care is clearly established and is now well known to the industry, especially given the high profile of HBA opposition to

sprinklers. Accordingly, whenever a fire involving a post-2010 home is litigated, perhaps by a grieving family or by an insurance company seeking to recoup a payout for fire damage, a decision by a builder to not include sprinklers in a new home will be easily characterized as a deliberate indifference towards life and property that resulted in a defective home.

About IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition
Founded in 2007, the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition has grown to include more than 100 international, national and regional public safety organizations, including associations representing 45 states, all of whom support the mission of promoting residential fire sprinkler systems in new home construction. The Coalition was formed to educate public policymakers on the value of residential sprinkler systems and to support related legislation. More information can be found at www.IRCFireSprinkler.org.

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