



March 5, 2025

LD 659 An Act to Reduce Housing Costs for Single-family Homes and 2-Family Homes

Senator Chip Curry

Representative Traci Gere

RE: LD 659

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

My name is Carl M Chretien resident of Saco, I'm here representing myself and the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Maine.

NFPA – National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, Massachusetts U.S. 02169-7471

NAHB - National Association of Home Builders, 1201 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005

I am in favor of this bill as it helps to makers home more affordable by removing an onerous requirement of installing a fire sprinkler system. These systems are unduly expensive especially where municipalities have low water pressure and in rural areas here homes are on dug or artesian wells. They often require holding tanks to store water where the source has low volumes. In systems that require pumps they require ongoing maintenance and testing which often doesn't happen even in commercial buildings. Having done work on a 4-unit building in Portland that required semiannual inspections this propert did not have an inspection for seven years till we had to extend it.

LD 659 addresses a back doorway of communities to enact fire sprinkler systems that sidestep LD 2257 enacted on April 24, 2008 to create a single state wide building code to better serve the citizens of Maine which would create uniformity in the built environment. This act repealed many discontinuous sections of statute and created one section under one title. [PUBLIC Law, Chapter 699, An Act To Establish a Uniform Building and Energy Code \(maine.gov\).](#)

- **Arguments Against Fire Sprinklers:** Chretien argues that fire sprinkler systems are expensive, especially in areas with low water pressure, and require ongoing maintenance that is often neglected.
- **Older Homes and Fire Safety:** He emphasizes that fire fatalities are more common in older homes and suggests that working smoke alarms are more effective in saving lives.
- **Cost Ineffectiveness:** Chretien states that the cost of installing fire sprinklers is prohibitive, averaging around \$6,000, which can price out potential homebuyers.
- **Critique of Fire Service Claims:** He challenges claims made by the fire service, arguing that newer homes use the same materials as older homes and that lightweight construction has been around since the early 1900s.

- **Consumer Pushback:** Chretien asserts that the pushback against fire sprinkler requirements comes consumers, not builders or realtors.
- **Legislative Approval:** He urges the legislative body to approve LD 659, arguing that the additional cost of fire sprinklers does not justify the minimal safety benefits.

A study done for the state of New York [ATT 2-Intro-and-Exec-Summary.pdf](#)

Article that NFPA asked the NAHB to write [Fire Protection Engineering - 2016.Q2 - page 8](#)

Smoke detectors saves lives [fire-sprinkler-infographic.pdf](#)

US Fire Administration data [Home Fire Fatalities in the News](#)

Home Innovations Lab (NAHB Research Center) study [residential-fire-sprinkler-survey-data-presentation.pdf](#)

Canadian Study it speaks for itself. [NH18-22-90-238E.pdf](#)

Having spent the last 10 years gathering and filtering thru the data for all residential fire deaths from the US Fire Administration to determine the age of homes as well as pulling deaths out that fire sprinklers will have no effect on campers, single – double wide HUD homes (manufactured and mobile homes) as well as deaths from outdoor fires. The data shows all but 2 deaths in homes built before 1970 in which this was the start of adding fire blocking as well as when smoke detectors became available on the market. It was in the early 70's when the fire service started going door to door to sell the battery ones, in which the recommended one per floor and in the attic. Mind you these were not interconnected like they are today. The data and reports that the State Fire Marshall's office sends out is raw data that has not been reviewed to understand what's in as well as to determine if there duplicate entry's I will provide data as well as summaries of why this a bill that needs to be passed. The additional cost of \$15,000 plus or minus doesn't justify the additional cost for very little extra safety. Codes are meant to be minimum, and the addition of sprinklers has a negligible payback.

So I hope you approve this bill.

Sincerely,
Carl M Chretien

President
TPI #29
CEO #1044
LPI

	Construction Year	Number of Units	Total Square Footage	Sprinkler Cost	Water Upgrade Cost:	Sprinkler Only Cost/Ft2	Total Cost/ft2 Including Required Water Service Upgrades:	Per unit cost including water upgrade costs
Dougherty Commons D4	2025	4	4,752.00	\$38,790.00	\$0.00	\$8.16	\$8.16	\$9,698
Dougherty Commons D5	2025	16	14,256.00	\$76,265.00	\$0.00	\$5.35	\$5.35	\$4,767
18 Central Ave (3 Units) , Peaks IS	2025	3	3,230.00	\$41,255.00	\$7,000.00	\$12.77	\$14.94	\$16,085
0 Knickerbocker Lane, Peaks, IS	2025	1	995.00	\$21,000.00	\$0.00	\$21.11	\$21.11	\$21,000
92 Luther Street, Peaks IS, ME	2024	1	885.00	\$11,000.00	\$0.00	\$12.43	\$12.43	\$11,000
70 Skylark Road, Portland, ME	2024	1	1,061.00	\$14,000.00	\$0.00	\$13.20	\$13.20	\$14,000
25 Motley Street, Portland, ME	2024	1	1,114.00	\$11,000.00	\$0.00	\$9.87	\$9.87	\$11,000
42 Codman Street, Portland, ME	2024	1	459.00	\$6,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$13.07	\$30.50	\$14,000
265 Stevens Ave, Portland, ME	2024	1	600.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$13.33	\$26.67	\$16,000
141 Dorothy Street, Portland, ME	2023	1	820.00	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$15.85	\$15.85	\$13,000
						average single u	\$18.52	\$14,286
						Average multiun	\$12.39	\$12,887

All 1 & 2 Family Fire Deaths in Maine 2012-2024

Year Built	Date	City	Gender	Age	Media URL
2010-2024 NONE					
2000-2010					
2002	11/25/2024	Bangor	Female	84	https://fox23maine.com/newsletter-daily/1-dead-after-bangor-fire-maine-state-fire-marshals-office-fairways
2005	04/17/2021	Fairfield	Female	56	https://www.pressherald.com/2021/04/17/fairfield-house-fire-kills-woman-injures-man/
2009	02/25/2021	Camden	Male	14	https://www.wabi.tv/2021/02/26/camden-house-fire-claims-life-of-14-year-old-boy/
pre 1996	02/22/2021	Lincoln	Female	7	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/7-year-old-girl-dies-in-lincoln-maine-fire/97-c5abb10d-10c6-4862-8acc-bd98e82f1af5
apt over gara	10/11/2020	Lebanon	Female	46	https://www.wabi.tv/2020/10/12/fire-marshals-investigate-fatal-fire-in-lebanon/
1980-2000					
1987	03/31/2016	Millinocket	Male	55	https://www.wmtw.com/news/man-killed-in-earlymoming-fire-in-millinocket/38779312
1988	01/24/2016	Gorham	Male	56	https://www.pressherald.com/2016/01/24/one-person-dead-in-gorham-fire/
1990?	03/05/2021	New Vineyar	Male	50	https://www.pressherald.com/2021/03/05/new-vineyard-man-dead-after-house-fire/
pre 1983	09/29/2022	West Gardine	Male	83	https://www.wabi.tv/2022/09/29/man-killed-west-gardiner-fire/
1983- 1990	08/14/2022	Stonington	Male	71	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/fire-crews-battle-house-fire-in-on-fifield-point-road-stonington-maine/97-d3657bf7-ad11-44bf-a3cc-b562eff8844a
2000 suicide	02/11/2017	York	Male	64	http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/20170211/man-killed-in-york-house-fire
Pre-1980					
pre 1977	10/31/2024	Skowhegan	Male	80	https://www.centralmaine.com/2024/11/01/skowhegan-man-80-dies-from-injunes-sustained-in-house-fire/
pre 1970	9/26/2024	Mexico	Female	23	https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/10/02/central-maine/central-maine-police-courts/police-identify-lacey-tidswell-found-dead-mexico-house-fire/
pre 1970	9/23/2024	Auburn	Male	60	https://www.wmtw.com/article/auburn-maine-deadly-house-fire-washington-street/62331780
1924= 100 ye	7/28/2024	Otisfield	Female	65	https://www.wmtw.com/article/structure-fire-causes-maine-road-closure/61724338

1924=	100 yr	7/28/2024	Otisfield	Male	77	https://www.wmtw.com/article/structure-fire-causes-maine-road-closure/61724338
1920		3/27/2024	St. George	Male	Unkno	https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2024/03/27/man-killed-in-maine-fire/
pre 1970		02/16/2024	Madawaska	Male	62	https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/02/16/aroostook/aroostook-police-courts/qary-levesque-madawaska-house-fire/
Pre 1970		02/24/2023	Naples	Male	43	https://www.pressherald.com/2023/02/24/naples-man-dies-in-early-morning-fire/
pre 1980		08/05/2022	Baileyville	Male	67	https://www.foxbangor.com/news/item/fatal-fire-in-baileyville/
pre 1960		02/04/2022	Rumford	Male	57	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/man-dies-in-rumford-fire-wife-escapes/ar-AAu20B
1930		08/11/2021	Portland	Male	74	https://bangordailynews.com/2021/08/11/news/portland/man-killed-in-portland-fire-identified/
1955?		06/10/2021	Winterport	Female	20	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/2-winterport-residents-killed-in-early-morning-house-fire-maine-department-of-public-safety-steam-road/97-de77feda-0912-45e3-85a2-a9bd3a9b1e27
1957		02/27/2021	Farmington	Male	75	https://www.sunjournal.com/2021/02/27/farmington-man-dies-in-house-fire/
1957		02/27/2021	Farmington	Female	72	https://www.sunjournal.com/2021/02/27/farmington-man-dies-in-house-fire/
pre 1950		11/21/2020	New Sharon	Female	Unkno	https://www.sunjournal.com/2020/11/24/new-sharon-fire-victim-identified-as-shaina-shaylin-begin/
pre 1970		01/14/2020	Fort Fairfield	Female	Unkno	https://q1065.fm/another-house-fire-in-fort-fairfield-claims-life-of-resident/
pre 1970		12/21/2019	Mattawamkeag	Female	59	https://www.pressherald.com/2019/12/22/woman-killed-in-house-fire-in-mattawamkeag/
1880		11/01/2019	Bangor	Male	59	https://bangordailynews.com/2019/11/03/news/bangor/bangor-man-dies-in-essex-street-fire/
pre 1970		08/07/2019	Athens	Male	Unkno	https://www.centralmaine.com/2019/08/08/man-found-dead-in-athens-home-destroyed-by-fire/
1930		07/05/2019	Auburn	Female	65	https://wqme.com/news/local/auburn-woman-dies-in-fire-while-smoking-on-oxygen
pre 1970		04/14/2019	Anson	Unknown	Unkno	https://www.centralmaine.com/2019/04/14/fatal-fire-in-anson-claims-one-life/
pre 1907		03/30/2019	Upton (Oxford)	Male	79	https://www.pressherald.com/2019/03/31/elderly-man-found-dead-after-fire-in-oxford-county/
pre 1970		02/04/2019	Orland	Male	40	https://www.wabi.tv/content/news/Orland-man-identified-as-victim-of-fatal-fire-505365081.html
pre 1970		01/19/2019	Orrington	Male	Unkno	https://bangordailynews.com/2019/01/19/news/bangor/identity-released-on-one-of-two-killed-in-early-morning-fire-in-orrington/
pre 1960		01/03/2019	North Anson	Male	63	https://www.pressherald.com/2019/01/03/man-killed-in-somerset-county-fire/

pre 1970	12/20/2018	Millinocket	Male	67	https://www.wabi.tv/content/news/Family-members-react-to-news-that-man-is-missing-after-fire-destroys-Millinocket-home-503242611.html
1950-1970	05/20/2018	Norway	Male	68	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/fire-kills-norway-man-cause-under-investigation/97-556188000
1950-1970	05/11/2018	Turner	Male	69	https://www.pressherald.com/2018/05/11/house-fire-kills-man-in-turner/
1920 2004ad	04/22/2018	Bar Harbor	Female	79	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/victims-identified-in-bar-harbor-farmhouse-fire-that-killed-mother-son/97-546398639
1956	04/21/2018	Falmouth	Male	73	https://www.pressherald.com/2018/04/22/victim-of-fatal-falmouth-fire-identified/
prior 1973	02/10/2018	Freeport	Female	68	https://bangordailynews.com/2018/02/10/news/midcoast/woman-dies-in-overnight-freeport-house-fire/
pre 1970	01/02/2018	Dixfield	Male	78	http://www.wcsh6.com/news/local/dixfield-man-dies-a-week-after-kitchen-fire/506832014
pre 1970	12/20/2017	Lebanon	Male	Unkno	http://www.wmtw.com/article/man-dies-in-lebanon-fire/14472537
oldest in town	05/28/2017	Surry	Male	86	http://bangordailynews.com/2017/05/28/news/hancock/fire-at-surry-farmhouse-claims-at-least-one-life/
oldest in town	05/24/2017	Union	Male	80	http://wabi.tv/2017/05/24/update-80-year-old-mans-name-released-in-fatal-union-house-fire/
1953	04/07/2017	Presque Isle	Male	60	http://www.waqtmtv.com/content/news/Man-dies-as-a-result-of-Presque-Isle-fire-419065434.html
70's	01/23/2017	Washington	Male	53	http://www.wmtw.com/article/several-departments-battle-washington-fire/8629031
1970-1980	01/08/2017	China	Male	65	http://www.wmtw.com/article/man-killed-in-early-sunday-morning-fire/8575040
70's	12/17/2016	Turner	Male	69	https://www.wmtw.com/article/man-dies-in-fire-at-turner-home/8510433
old house	11/07/2016	Old Town	Female	34	https://www.wcsh6.com/news/local/several-crews-respond-to-fire-on-bradbury-street-in-old-town/349619964
old house	11/07/2016	Old Town	Female	10	https://www.wcsh6.com/news/local/several-crews-respond-to-fire-on-bradbury-street-in-old-town/349619964
old house	11/07/2016	Old Town	Male	8	https://www.wcsh6.com/news/local/several-crews-respond-to-fire-on-bradbury-street-in-old-town/349619964
1935	10/09/2016	Boothbay	Male	23	https://www.pressherald.com/2016/10/09/two-dead-four-hurt-in-boothbay-house-fire/
1950	03/15/2016	Ellsworth	Male	93	https://www.pressherald.com/2016/03/15/house-fire-kills-man-in-ellsworth/
1947	02/24/2016	Bar Harbor	Female	46	https://www.pressherald.com/2016/02/24/fire-kills-woman-in-her-home-in-bar-harbor/
1875	06/22/2015	Kennebunk	Male	25	https://www.pressherald.com/2015/06/22/kennebunk-house-fire-kills-man-seriously-injures-another/

pre 80's	06/09/2015	Columbia Falls	Male	65	https://bangordailynews.com/2015/06/10/news/down-east/columbia-falls-man-dies-in-fire-while-trying-to-light-stove/
1950-1970	03/12/2015	Bucksport	Male	74	https://bangordailynews.com/2015/03/12/news/hancock/elderly-man-dead-in-bucksport-fire/
1950-1970	11/19/2014	St. Francis	Male	74	https://bangordailynews.com/2014/11/19/news/aroostook/man-killed-in-st-francis-fire/
1950-1970	06/03/2014	Livernore	Female	84	https://wabi.tv/2014/06/04/crews-respond-fire-livernore-camp/
1950-1970	05/07/2014	Augusta	Female	81	https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Woman-injured-in-Augusta-fire-dies-5533372.php
1900's	03/29/2014	Cooper	Male	80	https://bangordailynews.com/2014/04/08/news/down-east/cooper-man-dies-from-burns-suffered-in-march-fire/
pre 70's	02/11/2014	Sumner	Male	52	https://wabi.tv/2014/02/12/brother-sister-believed-dead-sumner-fire/
1945	01/31/2014	Berwick	Female	63	https://bangordailynews.com/2014/02/03/news/portland/woman-injured-in-berwick-fire-dies-at-boston-hospital
pre 70's	01/04/2014	Elliottsville	Female	79	https://wabi.tv/2014/01/05/update-elliotsville-township-fire-victims-identified/
pre 70's	12/14/2013	Perry	Male	93	https://bangordailynews.com/2013/12/16/news/down-east/fire-victim-identified-as-93-year-old-perry-man/
1934	02/10/2013	Portland	Female	56	https://www.pressherald.com/news/Portland-woman-dies-from-burn-injuries.html
pre 70's new	01/29/2013	Easton	Male	56	https://www.wabi.tv/news/37240/update-cause-of-fatal-easton-fire-undetermined-smoking-materials-not-ruled-out
old farm hous	01/24/2013	Somerville	Male	92	https://www.wlbz2.com/news/article/228899/3/Homeowner-found-dead-in-Somerville-fire
missing CO a:	11/09/2012	Orrington	Female	8	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/cardboard-boxes-blamed-maine-fire-killed-17700172#.UKJNB2fNIPE
previous slae	11/09/2012	Orrington	Male	9	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/cardboard-boxes-blamed-maine-fire-killed-17700172#.UKJNB2fNIPE
new law requi	11/09/2012	Orrington	Male	30	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/cardboard-boxes-blamed-maine-fire-killed-17700172#.UKJNB2fNIPE
	11/09/2012	Orrington	Male	4	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/cardboard-boxes-blamed-maine-fire-killed-17700172#.UKJNB2fNIPE
apparent suic	06/10/2013	Frenchville	Male	52	https://www.sivalley-times.com/view/full_story/22855496/article-Fatal-morning-fire-in-Frenchville-prompts-investigation?instance=most_popular
1940's	01/01/2022	Chelsea	Female	95	https://www.necn.com/news/local/maine-woman-dies-in-new-years-day-house-fire/2644766/
1955?	06/10/2021	Winterport	Male	29	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/2-winterport-residents-killed-in-early-morning-house-fire-maine-department-of-public-safety-steam-road/97-de77feda-0912-45e3-85a2-a9bd3a9b1e27

1900	12/05/2021	Bangor	Male	31	https://q1065.fm/fatal-fire-on-union-street-bangor/
1900	12/05/2021	Bangor	Male	56	https://q1065.fm/fatal-fire-on-union-street-bangor/
1900	12/05/2021	Bangor	Male	28	https://q1065.fm/fatal-fire-on-union-street-bangor/
pre 1973	11/02/2021	South Paris	Male	5	https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/5-year-old-child-dies-in-maine-house-fire/2549461/
1917	10/31/2018	South Portland	Female	33	https://www.timesrecord.com/articles/maine-1/woman-bumed-in-south-portland-house-fire-dies/

Unknown Age of Home

smoking on C	11/18/2016	Windham	Female	60	https://www.pressherald.com/2016/11/18/firefighters-battling-blaze-in-windham/
?	11/23/2024	Amity	Unknown	Unknown	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/fatal-house-fire-in-amity/ar-AA1uFpmJ?apiversion=v2&noservercache=1&domshim=1&renderwebcomponents=1&wcseo=1&batchservertelemetry=1&noservertelemetry=1
?	11/10/2024	Bangor	Male	Unknown	https://wgan.com/news/074470-one-person-dies-in-tent-fire-at-bangor-homeless-encampment/
	12/02/2023	New Gloucester	Male	44	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/public-safety/new-gloucester-fatal-house-fire-explosion-fumace/97-e0662305-e6a6-4bd7-bcdf-13d408a9a1b9
	11/06/2023	Carroll Plantation	Male	57	https://www.wabi.tv/2023/11/07/one-dead-after-fire-carroll-plantation/
	11/03/2023	Carmel	Male	Unknown	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/carmel-house-fire-haskell-road-one-dead/97-bb23802c-dd2f-427d-a8cd-b653e8881be7
	11/02/2023	Fort Fairfield	Female	39	https://www.wmtw.com/article/several-members-family-killed-fort-fairfield-maine-fire/45725423
	11/02/2023	Fort Fairfield	Male	47	https://www.wmtw.com/article/several-members-family-killed-fort-fairfield-maine-fire/45725423
	11/02/2023	Fort Fairfield	Female	17	https://www.wmtw.com/article/several-members-family-killed-fort-fairfield-maine-fire/45725423
	04/13/2022	Montville	Male	74	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/two-more-die-as-result-of-montville-maine-explosion-fire-propane-buxton-darci-lane/97-e5935e05-303f-4d41-bc6b-b7481f5b185e
	04/13/2022	Montville	Male	78	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/two-more-die-as-result-of-montville-maine-explosion-fire-propane-buxton-darci-lane/97-e5935e05-303f-4d41-bc6b-b7481f5b185e
1988	04/13/2022	Montville	Male	88	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/two-more-die-as-result-of-montville-maine-explosion-fire-propane-buxton-darci-lane/97-e5935e05-303f-4d41-bc6b-b7481f5b185e
	10/10/2021	Mechanic Falls	Female	74	https://fox23maine.com/news/local/one-person-dies-in-house-fire-in-mechanic-falls

	08/04/2021	Portland	Male	73	https://www.wmtw.com/article/police-identify-man-killed-in-portland-maine-fire/37284863#
?	08/23/2020	Buxton	Male	52	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/maine/articles/2020-08-24/fire-claims-life-of-man-in-buxton-maine
?	07/26/2020	Bangor	Female	68	https://whtc.com/news/articles/2020/jul/26/bangor-house-fire-kills-one/1043260/
?	03/01/2020	Perry	Male	32	https://bangordailynews.com/2020/03/02/news/down-east/man-killed-in-washington-county-house-fire/
?	02/20/2020	Vassalboro	Male	26	https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/community/mom-of-disabled-man-killed-in-fire-speaks-out/97-60a93c55-82f5-40a0-a45b-47b2d367e9f7
	12/01/2018	Hiram	Male	19	https://wgme.com/news/local/man-killed-in-hiram-fire-four-others-escape-through-windows
	09/26/2018	Eddington	Male	Unkno	https://www.heraldcourier.com/news/officials-killed-in-house-fire/article_3593ba76-31df-5162-bc58-65dc4ef497fb.html
	06/12/2018	Livernore Fal	Male	65	https://www.necn.com/news/new-england/1-Killed-in-Livernore-Falls-Maine-Fire-2-Kids-Jump-to-Safety-485321901.html ; http://www.sunjournal.com/livernore-falls-officer-credited-with-saving-lives-of-two-boys-in-deadly-fire/
	06/03/2018	Springvale	Male	54	https://www.journaltribune.com/articles/front-page/fatal-fire-victim-believed-to-be-homeowner-officials-say/
	05/30/2017	Ormeville	Male	Unkno	https://wabi.tv/2017/05/30/fatal-fire-in-ormeville-early-tuesday-morning/
	08/20/2016	Mexico	Male	45	https://www.wcsh6.com/news/local/1-dead-1-seriously-injured-after-home-fire-in-mexico/303580733
	12/30/2015	Lebanon	Male	57	https://www.wcsh6.com/story/news/2015/12/30/lebanon-fatal-fire/78079070/
	12/13/2015	New Gloucester	Unknown	Unkno	https://telegraphstandard.com/1-killed-in-new-gloucester-fire/2212
	08/29/2015	Old Town	Female	68	https://bangordailynews.com/2015/08/29/news/bangor/firefighter-injured-while-battling-blaze-in-old-town/?ref=topStories3
	08/15/2015	Lincolnville	Male	81	https://bangordailynews.com/2015/08/16/news/midcoast/lincolnville-fire-kills-elderly-couple/
	03/10/2014	Limington	Female	52	https://www.pressherald.com/news/Limington-house-fire-kills-one.html
	01/08/2014	Oxford	Male	55	https://bostonherald.com/news_opinion/national/northeast/2014/01/maine_man_dies_in_house_fire
	10/09/2013	Bethel	Male	39	https://www.wlbz2.com/news/article/259367/3/Maine-man-dies-in-early-morning-fire-Bethel
	09/04/2013	Brunswick	Female	91	https://www.theforecaster.net/news/print/2013/09/10/woman-dies-burns-after-brunswick-fire/172055
	05/16/2013	Monroe	Male	56	https://www.wcsh6.com/news/article/244042/2/Fatal-fire-investigated-in-Monroe

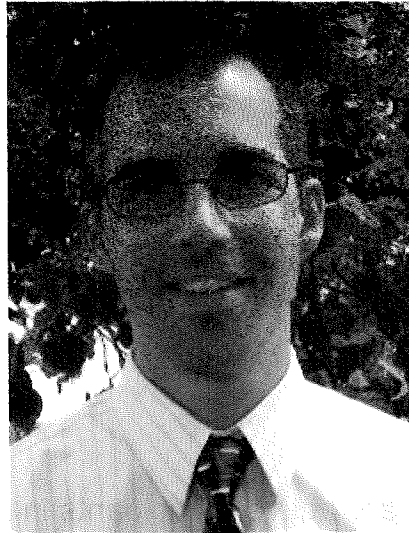
unlined chimn	12/23/2012	Orono	Male	47	https://www.wbz2.com/news/article/225715/3/2-men-found-dead-1-missing-after-Orono-house-fire
detached gar	12/09/2012	Bristol	Female	69	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Fire-kills-1-in-coastal-Maine-town-4103467.php
	10/23/2012	Old Orchard E	Female	62	https://www.kjonline.com/news/Womans-body-found-in-burned-Old-Orchard-building.html

Collated by Carl Chretien, 2024

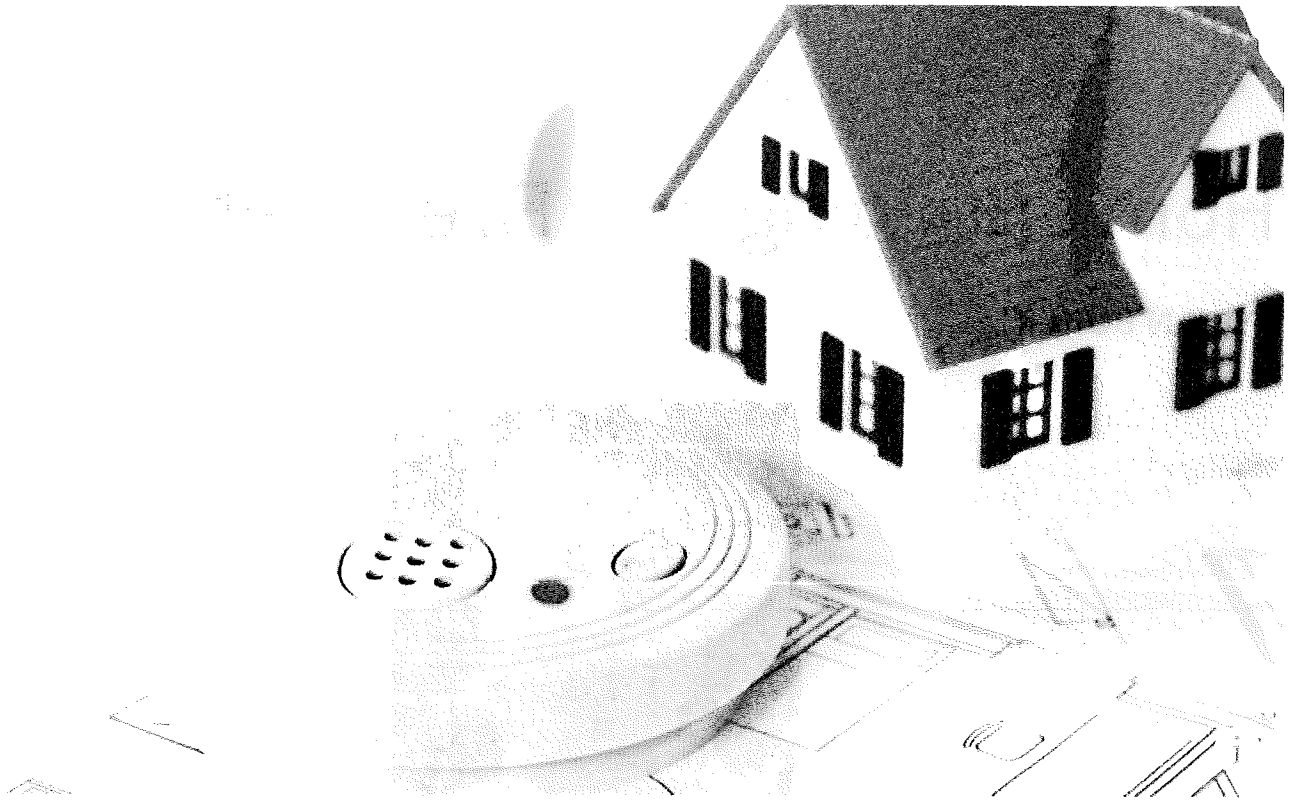
VIEW POINT FIRE PROTECTION INDUSTRY VIEWS

Home Building and Fire Safety

BY DAN BUUCK



***THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS** is a firm believer in safe, affordable homes. Our members have a vested interest in the safety of their products both during the building process and after the house becomes someone's home.*



For that reason, home builders are active participants in the codes and standards development process. They help make sure that each advance in building science and technology is weighed for the appropriate balance of safety, efficiency and cost to help guarantee that each code cycle results in advances that improve homes without pricing them out of reach.

The home builder acts as a consumer advocate, offering a counterpoint to code change proposals that benefit particular brands or products.

And when it comes to advances in fire safety technology, our members are proud to produce homes built to building codes designed to keep their occupants safer than homes built by previous generations.

There have been significant improvements in the fire safety of homes over the past few decades, leading to a dramatic, continued decrease in fires, injury, deaths and property loss. As fire safety professionals know, fire deaths have decreased by over 60 percent since 1960 (50 percent since 1978), while the death rate based on population size has decreased by well over 70 percent.

Technological innovations in building techniques include advanced heating and electrical systems, egress windows, hardwired, interconnected smoke alarm systems, and fire-resistant materials and features like the separation between the house and the garage and fireblocking in concealed spaces.

When homeowners combine these advances with proper maintenance, homes stay safer. And as more of the existing housing stock that doesn't include these improved fire safety features is replaced, this trend will continue.

Why Smoke Alarms Matter

Do not underestimate the effectiveness of smoke alarms. Since 1989, NFPA 72, National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code has required hardwired, interconnected smoke alarms. Fire alarms continue to become more effective with ongoing technical advances.

Such improvements include the proliferation of 10-year integral batteries, which substantially lengthen the interval between low-battery signals. Batteries in these units also cannot be used in other devices, which eliminates the possibility of anyone removing them to power other electronic devices.

There is also continued research aimed at improving the detection algorithm to reduce false alarms from cooking. All these improvements are still unfolding, and can be expected to reduce the number of fatalities. And throughout the country, local home building associations often work with community fire departments on fire safety campaigns and to ensure that consumers take advantage of this life-saving technology by conducting awareness campaigns and even donating new units.

This education and awareness are vital because the main causes of unintentional, non-confined home fires are heating equipment and electrical malfunction, both primarily associated with older homes. New homes are equipped with new heating appliances with clearances, vents and chimneys which follow current codes. Additional safety features also make heating appliances and chimneys more reliable and produce a more balanced airflow reducing the need for supplemental heaters, which are more likely to start a fire. And FEMA's report, One- and Two-Family Residential Building Fires (2011-

2013) finds “a strong relationship between housing age and the rate of electrical fires . . . with housing over 40 years old having the strongest association with electrical distribution fires. As of 2013, the median age of one- and two-family housing was over 35 years.”

The report also notes a 2008 study that found, “there are three major areas in older properties that contribute to compromised electrical systems: the effects of aging on the wiring itself, misuse and abuse of the electrical components, and non-code-compliant installations.”

There have been significant improvements in the fire safety of homes over the past few decades, leading to a dramatic, continued decrease in fires, injury, deaths and property loss.

Going forward, it is important to consider carefully any additional requirements so we don't put safer new homes financially out of reach for those households now in older dwellings.

It is a sad irony when Americans cannot afford to be safe. Families who cannot qualify to purchase homes due to the increased costs from well-meant but expensive and ultimately unnecessary safety features will remain in housing that is less safe because it was built to less stringent code requirements. These older homes can have outdated appliances, space heaters, faulty wiring, or other characteristics that might lead to a greater risk of a fire starting, or a lack of smoke alarms and egress windows installed to today's codes which increases the chances of dying in that fire.

For that reason, we take our code development responsibilities seriously. We must ensure that new homes are safe, but not just available to the wealthy.

DAN BUUCK *is with the National Association of Home Builders.*