



April 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.

- Most fires occur in housing constructed before the 1980's
 - Most of the fires derive from heating (not well insulated), cooking (inattentiveness) and electrical (connecting knob and tubing to current Romex).
 - Nearly two thirds of Maine housing stock was constructed before 1979
- Sprinklers price homeowners, particularly first-time homebuyers, out of the market
 - Actual costs
 - 2265 sq.ft colonial \$18,700.00 requires tank and pump, does not include extra air sealing as required by energy code
 - 1565 sq.ft ranch \$16,700.00, requires tank and pump, does not include extra air sealing as required by energy code
 - Material alone for 30 concealed heads \$6,543.13
 - Adding \$10,000 to the cost of a home will require \$2,400 more income to support a mortgage.
 - In most of Maine the Annual Median Income for a family of three is about \$80,000.
 - Adding the cost of sprinklers will requires family income to increase by 3% or \$2,400.
- Smoke Detectors Work

- Hard wire smoke detectors have substantially reduced the risk of injury and death in residential fires
- More stringent enforcement including Towns that are not required to enforce the MEUBEC would be a more cost effective way to reduce risk.

10. Transfer of dwelling. *A person who, after October 31, 2009, acquires by sale or exchange a single-family dwelling or a multi-apartment building shall install smoke detectors in the acquired dwelling within 30 days of acquisition or occupancy of the dwelling, whichever is later, if smoke detectors are not already present, and shall certify at the closing of the transaction that the purchaser will make the proper installation. This certification must be signed and dated by the purchaser. The smoke detectors must be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements at the time of installation. The smoke detectors must be powered by the electrical service in the building or by battery.*

A person may not have a claim for relief against a property owner, a property purchaser, an authorized agent of a property owner or purchaser, a person in possession of real property, a closing agent or a lender for any damages resulting from the operation, maintenance or effectiveness of a smoke detector.

Violation of this subsection does not create a defect in title.

This building had an additional six detectors added to meet the existing code.

This building has a mix of knob and tube wiring as well as the current Romex wiring. This poses a problem if not done correctly as often the older wiring was aluminum and 14 gauge in twenty-amp circuits. Using uninsulated homes is not a big issue except when mixed with the current use of copper of wiring and now inosculated over you start to have wiring overheating. Now this can be combated if those circuits were outfitted with arc-fault circuit interrupters. This ii not a problem with today's electrical code.



Circa 1900's prior to 1911



The home above was built in 1987 using 2x6 studs for the walls, 2x10 floor joist a16" on center and roof trusses two feet on center. The walls have been insulated from the start, which prevented the problems that come with blindly insulating homes creating voids that allowed the framing to easier to off gas and be allowed to quickly erupt into flames. As this house is not ballooned frame, the ability of fire to spread from floor to floor or roof is difficult due to the fire blocking. The electrical code at the time was adequate in keeping homes safe from electrical fire with two separate counter circuits as well spacing no more than 12 feet so that the use of extension cords that create unsafe conditions is eliminated.

Also, the 1979 BOCA code and later required smoke detectors and now also carbon monoxide detectors. Builders Guide I worked for HUD: [Natural-Hazards Volume-3-Fire.pdf](#)

Links to economic articles.

[‘Discontinued’ Red, Blue Uponor PEX Piping Plagued by Cracking Defect, Class Action Alleges](#)

[It Takes 22 Subcontractors to Build the Average Home](#)

[Regulation Now Accounts for \\$93,870 of the Average New Home Price](#)

[Remodeling in 2021: Kitchens Edge Baths for Top Spot](#)

[HomeFireSprinklerCostAssessment2013.pdf](#)

[Builders’ Profit Margins Improved in 2023](#)

[Credit for Builders Less Available, Costs More](#)

[Credit Conditions for Builders and Developers Continue to Worsen](#)

<https://www.huduser.gov/Publications/PDF/fire.pdf>

[NAHB’s Response to the NFPA Fire Sprinkler Initiative | NAHB](#)

[New Standard For Carbon Monoxide Detectors Can Save Hundreds Of Lives Each Year | CPSC.gov](#)

[design-and-construction-manual---replacement-window-specifications.pdf](#)

[Title 25, §2464: Smoke detectors](#)

[Year Built and Year Moved In | American Community Survey | U.S. Census Bureau](#)

[B25035: Median Year Structure Built - Census Bureau Table](#)

[Homeownership Affordability Indexes](#)

[Data Portal | State of Maine Housing Data Portal](#)

[520 Hz Low Frequency for 120VAC Smoke Alarms IFC 2021 | Fire Alarms Online](#)

Maine

Housing Units Built in 1939 or Earlier

23.1 percent

Source: Latest ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles/Housing Characteristics

Moved into Housing Unit between 2000 and 2009

19.1 percent

Source: Latest ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles/Housing Characteristics

Median Year Structure Built

1976

Source: Latest ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables: B25035

United States®
Census
Bureau

1 Filter ⓘ

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B25035 | Median Year Structure Built

American Community Survey Universe: Housing units 2023: ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables

Notes Geos Top

Label	Maine	
	Estimate	Margin of Error
Median year structure built	1976	±1

Sincerely,
Carl M Chretien

President

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