

## Editorial



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### **NEW BUILDING CODE PROPOSALS BRING CONCERN TO ASSOCIATION**

***Proposed code adoptions by the Fire Commission have created concern among members of the Association. Specifically ...***

**2008 National Electric Code (NEC)** which mandates 'ground fault protections' and 'tamper proof receptacles'. Testimony by electrical contractors Tim Cunningham (Greater Charleston) and Rusty Crites (North Central) was that it has not been justified by clear findings and would create price increases of approximately \$2000.00 in an average size home.

**International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)** would require homes to have more stringent requirements for energy efficiency in walls, ceilings, floors, mechanicals and other energy components. When Government Affairs chairman Chris Ilardi (North Central) asked Tom Board of O.C. Cluss Lumber Co. in Fairmont to draw a comparison of cost using the IECC as opposed to our existing energy code, they came up with a figure increase of \$6,316.84 for materials alone in a modest 2 story, 3 bedroom home over an unfinished basement with no garage or carport. Obviously the labor cost involved would add more dollars with the anticipated cost increase somewhere in the neighborhood of \$10,000.

**2009 International Residential Code (IRC)** contains a section which would mandate the installation of sprinkler systems in one and two family structures. Testimony and research by Fred Blackmer (Eastern Panhandle) pointed out additional costs of \$2,000 to \$16,000.

Another major factor is West Virginia's limited public water systems and could be key to the affordability and effectiveness of a home sprinkler system. A homeowner who has no knowledge of the fact that they would need regular inspections and annual maintenance could create future costs many homeowners could be unprepared to handle.

We have been joined (in opposition of sprinkler systems) by Habitat for Humanity of WV. The group has issued a policy statement which strongly opposes the change, comparing a cost increase of \$2,000 to \$6,000 and also point out that WV is a vastly rural state with limited public water utilities, a factor that is key in the affordability and effectiveness.

"Without public water sources, the cost of these systems becomes prohibitive," they said, and "for homes using well water, storage tanks, pumps and control hardware to meet a one size fits all standard can carry staggering costs".

It is imperative that legislators know that the Home Builders Association as well as Habitat for Humanity of West Virginia does not oppose the voluntary installation of sprinklers, but does oppose unnecessary and added expensive mandates that would hurt the ability to build affordable homes and keep many WV families from having the opportunity for home ownership.

As we go through the legislative review committee process on these rules, we need to let the Committee Members know of our opposition, and more importantly "Why". Members of the Legislative Rule Making Review Committee are Senators Joe Minard (Harrison County); Donna Boley (Pleasants County); Karen Facemyer (Jackson County); Roman Prezioso (Marion County); Herb Snyder (Jefferson County), and John Unger (Berkeley County). Committee members from the House are Delegates Bonnie Brown (Kanawha County); Tim Miley (Harrison County); John Overington (Berkeley County); Dan Poling (Wood County); Kelli Sobonya (Cabell County); and Joe Talbott (Webster County). Both Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin (Logan County) and House Speaker Rick Thompson (Wayne County) are ex-officio members.

***"Our message is simply that adoption of these codes in their entirety without amendments will have a devastating effect on the home building industry..."***

Our message is simply that adoption of these codes in their entirety without amendments will have a devastating effect on the home building industry and would come at a time when fewer West Virginia citizens can afford a home because of worsening economic conditions. Creating a situation by mandating unaffordable elements is not wise, practical or prudent at this time.

We also need to look at the possibility of job losses as some businesses could be forced out of business due to the lack of customers. We are a proud industry, dedicated to providing safe and affordable housing to West Virginia's citizens and we seek their support in not having to close the door on those trying to better the lives of their families by achieving their American Dream – and especially so at a time when adversity is rampant in the home building industry.

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