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TENNESSEE FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS FIRE SPRINKLERS AND HOME RULE

The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association would like to take an official stand on recent news stories involving residential fire sprinklers across the state. Tennessee has been singled out across the nation due to comments made by one fire chief. The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association feels compelled to state that we do not support the interpretation of recent comments that imply local governments across our state should use the state adopted code as a maximum code for their communities. We do not want to be in the position of some other states across our country, that being that local governments don't have the right to exceed minimum codes.

We want to work closely with fire officials, building officials, our state fire marshal and all stakeholders interested in providing fire and life safety to our citizens. However, we are not willing to compromise home rule and the local governments ability to provide fire protection in our communities.

It is the position of the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association to support the statewide adoption of the International Residential Code, as we have introduced legislation the past two years to set a state-wide minimum code. It is also the position of the Tennessee Fire Service Coalition, which is comprised of the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, Tennessee Fireman's Association, Tennessee Fire Safety Inspectors Association, Tennessee Chapter IAAC, Tennessee Fire & Burglar Alarm Association, and Tennessee Fire Sprinkler Contractors Association to strongly oppose any attempt to make Tennessee a mini-max state and restrict local government authority to exceed minimum standards, which is traditional in our country. We are strongly committed to keeping power closest to the citizen and that is at the local level, which is the individual citizen through their local government not at the advice of the homebuilders.

Each community in our state is unique in the way in which they are able to provide fire protection to our community. Providing the highest level of fire & life safety as possible within our means to the citizens and the safest environment for our firefighters is our responsibility as fire chiefs. Fire sprinklers are a valuable tool in providing community fire protection and part of the comprehensive fire and life safety package known to save lives, citizens and firefighters.

"As President of the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, I bring 35 years of fire service experience with me – both as Deputy Chief in Memphis and Chief in Collierville," explains Collierville Fire Chief Jerry Crawford. "I have never been to a fire fatality in a building protected with fire sprinklers, nor do I know anyone personally who has."

The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association is proud to stand in support of fire sprinklers, along with acting U.S. Fire Administrator Glenn Gaines and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. According to Gaines' statement, released on June 4, 2009, more than 30 years of research has demonstrated residential fire sprinklers can save the lives of building occupants and firefighters, significantly offset the risk of premature building collapse posed by lightweight construction, and substantially reduce property loss caused by fire.

Chief Gaines adds, "The time has come to use this affordable, simple and effective technology to save lives and property where it matters most – in our homes."

For more information about the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, visit www.tnfirechiefs.com.

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