



Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association

P.O. Box 25052 • Nashville, TN 37202

Dear Assistant Commissioner Jim Pillow:

The cost of installing fire sprinklers in one and two family dwellings is minimal in comparison to the cost of adequately funding a fire department. The real reason I humbly submit this letter on behalf of the members that comprise the Tennessee Fire Chief's Association is the effectiveness and life safety benefits offered to our citizens and our firefighters. It is our desire to participate in the production of a report, in cooperation with all stakeholder groups, particularly the Homebuilders Association, for the Tennessee General Assembly. An outcome of education and increased awareness will result for us all, but the true outcome we all seek is a safer Tennessee.

The Tennessee Fire Chief's Association is pleased with the intent to adopt the 2009 edition of the International Residential Code and we know it will save lives and money in the future. As an association we have not only supported the inclusion of building and fire codes for all residential occupancies, we introduced legislation several times in an attempt to have building and fire codes apply to one and two family dwellings in Tennessee because this is where our citizens are receiving debilitating injuries and deaths. The Tennessee Fire Chief's have been committed to seeing Tennessee move out of the top 10 states for fire deaths. As your office is well aware, over 100 people die annually in our great state and that loss must be reduced. We have an opportunity to make the decisions today that will ensure those who follow us will face less of a burden than we face.

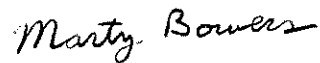
It is with pride that we are considered a Southern state with such heritage and a great quality of life, it is embarrassing to be considered a typical Southern state with an extremely high fire death rate, 27.4 per million population in comparison to the national average of 13.3 per million population. These poor statistics give way to the continued stereotyping of the South, poor and ignorant. Well, let's not be ignorant in this report to the general assembly for we do not lack the knowledge and we have never lacked the will.

Tennessee has always been a leader when it comes to fire departments. We have many great fire chiefs across our state and we have had a lot of fire service professionals who have not only made a difference in their own community, but across the state and the nation. Howard Boyd, former fire marshal for the Nashville Fire Department was a trend-setter in the national codes process and there are many more too numerous to mention. I specifically reference Chief Boyd because of a recent discovery of a speech he made to a national conference about the concerns of interior finish and the high combustibility of building contents. We have observed reports and attended training sessions recently that indicates because of the volume of material in our homes and the material in which these contents are made we are five times more vulnerable today than in 1950, yet the fire department still utilizes many of the

same techniques and the same flows of water. Well, Chief Boyd was telling us this in his speech in 1978, why some 31 years later have we not dealt with this issue? The most effective way to address this issue, then and today, is to get water on the fire early, while it is small. The most effective, cost efficient means to deliver that water to the fire early is through the installation of fire sprinklers. As I key this letter and transition from draft to final, the news is reporting 9 people dead in a residential occupancy in Mississippi. This is such a tragedy, yet too many in the country look at it as an acceptable loss, even many in our own profession will look at it and say, yep, that's Mississippi, which would be the same comments if it were in Tennessee. Let's do something about this unfortunate trend. I don't have many details on the tragic fire in Mississippi, but the one thing I do know is that the building those people died in didn't have a fire sprinkler system. I don't know this because it has been reported, I know this because it is practically impossible. While there isn't one single cure-all for the fire problem in our state or our country, fire sprinklers must be a part of the solution. We won't be able to save every life, nor prevent every injury, but we will be able to greatly minimize this risk, our citizens and firefighters deserve it.

The Tennessee Fire Chief's Association is committed to assisting your office in whatever way possible to improve fire and life safety in Tennessee. We look forward to the opportunity to create a report that sets the stage for continual improvement in fire protection. Our state, and its citizens needs the leadership that this effort can produce—our citizens deserve the road map to a safer place to live.

Humbly Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marty Bowers".

Marty Bowers, President
Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association