

## Why is Senate Bill 129 necessary?

Senate Bill 129 is a proactive response to a national movement to mandate the installation of residential fire sprinkler systems in all new one and two-family construction homes.

These two articles are from the pro-sprinkler group ResidentialFireSprinklers.com.

The first article was written before the annual International Code Council (ICC) meeting and it discusses their plan to influence voting members and raise funds for the travel and lodging of fire sprinkler proponents.

The second article was written after they were able to show up en masse and vote to include a mandatory residential fire sprinkler requirement in the 2009 International Residential Code (IRC).

The second article ends with a quote from Ronny J. Coleman, president of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition, **“We’re now going to move forward at the state and local level to ensure the new code requirement is adopted.”**

While residential fire sprinkler systems are an excellent option for homeowners who chose to pay the added expense of installation and upkeep, they should not be forced on Alaskans who are already dealing with a multitude of economic burdens and live in a climate where frozen and burst water pipes are an all too common experience.

# Residential Fire Sprinklers .com

## USFA Announces Official Support for Residential Fire Sprinklers

April 28th, 2008 by Ryan J. Smith

On March 28, 2008, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) office delivered a potentially fatal blow to opponents of residential fire sprinkler requirements. For those not familiar with the USFA, it is an entity of the US Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In other words, this is the highest government agency in the United States focused on reducing life and economic losses due to fire.

So what impact does this have on residential fire sprinkler requirements? Well, immediately it has little significant impact since the USFA does not directly control the building and fire codes. But, the USFA is a highly visible federal entity that works through research, data gathering and public education to influence the building and fire codes used in the United States.

The USFA's public support of residential fire sprinklers adds a shot of adrenaline to the movement for mandated residential fire sprinklers. Public education on the benefits of residential fire sprinklers will increase and fire service professionals will have a new wave of energy to publicly voice their support.

For many, this official position signals that it is an inevitable reality that residential fire sprinklers will be required in all new home construction in the United States. Others are patiently waiting on the sidelines to see how those opposing residential fire sprinkler requirements will react.



At the center of this intensifying debate are the proposed code changes to the International Residential Code (IRC) which, if passed, will mandate residential fire sprinklers in all new home construction. The IRC is part of the International Building Code (IBC), that is widely adopted as law throughout the United States.

The next revision of the IRC will be published in 2009 and all proposed changes must receive final approval at the September 2008 hearing to be included in this next revision.

A special coalition has been formed with a primary mission to get the votes necessary to pass code changes to the IRC that will require residential fire sprinklers with a zero square foot tolerance. This IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition is formed as a non-profit organization and provides the many supporters of home fire sprinkler requirements an opportunity to support their voting government officials to ensure these code changes are approved.

Support includes both encouraging voting government officials to vote “yes” on the codes changes and fundraising to cover travel expenses that will be incurred for voting government officials to be present at the September hearing.

The primary opposition has been the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), which views residential fire sprinkler requirements as unnecessary and too expensive for the benefits they provide; their argument that smoke alarms are sufficient for home fire safety has been countered with firm opposition from the fire prevention and fire fighting communities.

You can bet that with the USFA’s official position now made public, the debate of residential fire sprinklers will continue to heat up leading to the September 2008 hearings.

## **ICC Approves Residential Fire Sprinklers in the International Residential Code**

September 21st, 2008 by Residential Fire Sprinklers .com

Voting members of the leading building code body in the nation, the International Code Council (ICC), overwhelmingly supported a residential fire sprinkler requirement for all new one- and two-family homes and townhouses.

Fire service and building code officials united to approve the requirement and countered opposition. The code proposal, RB64, easily overcame a procedural requirement that mandated a super-majority of two-thirds approval. This represents an unprecedented step forward in advancing home fire safety in the United States.

The vote, held today in Minneapolis, was supported by 73 percent of the voting members in attendance.

The IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition, an association of more than 100 fire service, building code official, and safety organizations representing 45 states, assumed a leadership position and secured unified support for this issue over the past 18 months.

“Our team worked hard to rally support throughout the United States for a residential fire sprinkler requirement, but our supporters deserve the recognition for **showing up en masse in Minneapolis**,” said Ronny J. Coleman, president of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition. “They know from experience that sprinklers are the answer to the nation’s fire problem.”

Fire deaths in the United States realized a dramatic decline over the past three decades as smoke alarms became common – today, more than 95 percent of homes have them. Still, more than 3,000 people die each year from fire, and a home burns every 80 seconds. Residential sprinklers are the only fire protection technology that works to rapidly contain fire, effectively giving families more time to escape the deadly heat and poisonous gases of an unchecked fire. Therefore, the proposal’s passage has also pleased home safety advocates across the country.

“We work with families every day that are directly affected by the ravages of fire,” said Meri-K Appy, president of the Home Safety Council. “We are thrilled not only because this moment has taken decades of demanding work to achieve, but because it provides protection for potential victims of future fires.”

Kaaren Mann, a fire safety advocate and the mother of a fire victim stated in her testimony, “the cost to put sprinklers into the home where my daughter died would have been less than what I had to pay for the flowers at her funeral.”

The sprinkler mandate will first appear in the 2009 International Residential Code® (IRC), which will be published by the end of the year. Forty-six states use the IRC as the basis of regulating new home construction.

“The vote was a historic moment in residential fire safety – and is a significant step in a long journey before sprinklers are installed in every new home,” noted Ronny J. Coleman, president of the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition. “We’re now going to move forward at the state and local level to ensure new code requirement is adopted.”