STATE REPRESENTATIVE
47th DISTRICT
GEOFF SIMPSON

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
& HOUSING
CHAIR

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
& INSURANCE

TRANSPORTATION

RECEIVED
JUN 29 2009
SBCC

June 25, 2009

Washington State Building Code Council
128 10th Avenue SW
Olympia, WA 98504-2525

Dear Council Members,

We understand that the Building Code Council is in the process of updating the State Building Code for the International Residential Code to require residential sprinkler systems in new one- and two- family homes and town houses. We support of the adoption of the nationally recognized provision for fire sprinklers in homes and townhomes.

All nationally recognized building, fire and life safety codes now require newly constructed homes and townhomes to be equipped with automatic fire sprinklers as a good measure of safe practice. The main reason for fire sprinklers in these occupancies is to reduce the number of fire fatalities currently occurring in homes. In 2007, home structure fires were responsible for roughly 84% of civilian fire deaths nationwide.

Fire sprinklers are a proven, reliable and affordable method of protecting life and property. The installation of fire sprinklers in newly constructed homes, which would be a minimal expense to the home- buyer, will significantly reduce fire related fatalities, and prevent substantial property loss.

Washington state fire departments responded to an estimated 4,200 home structure fires in 2007, accounting for approximately 55% of civilian fire fatalities. In addition to fatalities, home structure fires caused a staggering $90 million in direct property damage and loss. Clearly, these homes, without fire sprinklers, have the majority of fire problems, both nationally and within Washington State.

Opponents to these life-saving systems argue that fire sprinklers installation should be voluntary. We should not expect buyers to include these safety systems as an option when purchasing a home, just as we do not expect a car buyer to decide on including seatbelts as an option; the homebuyer, once the house is constructed, does not have the option to include fire sprinklers.

Opponents have also raised concerns regarding technical issues with sprinklers, excessive home building costs and the lack of fire marshals as reasons to oppose these life saving systems; these concerns are unfounded and does not warrant negligence in omitting fire sprinklers.

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE: 426 JOHN L. O'BRIEN BUILDING, PO BOX 40600, OLYMPIA, WA 98504-0600 • 360-786-7918
TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 1-800-562-6000 • TDD: 1-800-635-9993
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Currently, fire sprinklers are required for other occupancies in all counties of this state. As such, code and fire officials are available in these areas to provide proper plan review and inspection. There is no need for added fire marshals to address fire sprinklers for homes. Washington State has a regulatory system in place to address requirements for fire sprinklers, whether they are installed in homes or other occupancies.

We strongly urge that you maintain the nationally recognized standard of practice for requiring fire sprinklers in newly constructed one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses. The evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates the great need for these life saving systems. Concerns about the technical aspects of this proven technology are unfounded, and Washington state regulatory system already addresses fire sprinklers for other occupancies.

Thank you for giving careful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Geoff Simpson
State Representative
47th Legislative District

Sharon Nelson
State Representative
34th Legislative District

Brendan Williams
State Representative
22nd Legislative District

Mark Miloscia
State Representative
30th Legislative District