



PREVENT CONSTRUCTION FIRES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Construction sites can be significant fire hazards. In the past several years, massive fires requiring response from hundreds of firefighters have caused millions in property damage and resulted in fatalities. Communities that have experienced these fires have lost hundreds of planned housing units, exacerbating efforts to address affordability and low housing stock issues. These fires also delay income and revenue from new residents and businesses, as nearly completed projects must be rebuilt.

TO MINIMIZE RISK IN YOUR COMMUNITY, MAKE SURE-



Construction site developers file a written fire prevention program when applying for a permit.

Fire prevention programs for construction sites are required by the fire code through NFPA 241, *Standard for Safeguarding Construction, Alteration, and Demolition Operations*. All permit applicants must have a written plan designating a fire prevention manager and identifying specific steps to reduce risk of fire. These plans should be developed with input from the fire department. Too often, this code requirement is ignored. Reduce risk: make sure your community requires this plan.



Your community uses the newest version of the fire code.

Just as construction methods and materials change, the fire code and NFPA 241 also get updated. To find out what edition of the fire code your community uses, refer to NFPA's CodeFinder™ at codefinder.nfpa.org.



You go beyond the minimum.

NFPA 241 is a minimum safety standard. Communities can do more to protect workers, firefighters, and property. Ask your fire officials if certain construction projects should have extra security, fire sprinkler protection during construction,

and heat detectors that can alert workers to the presence of a fire. Cities might also consider regulating hot work activities such as cutting and welding that are common fire hazards on construction sites. To learn more, visit nfpa.org/hotwork.

“ We only have 6,650 units of housing under construction, and more is needed... every new unit of housing is going to help this Bay Area region start to stabilize what is now an unsustainable housing market. ”

–Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf,
after a 2017 construction fire

PREVENT CONSTRUCTION FIRES IN YOUR COMMUNITY *CONTINUED*

Examples of Major Fires in Buildings Under Construction: 2017 – 2018

Raleigh, North Carolina. March 17, 2017



Details: Fire destroyed a 241-unit, five-story apartment complex under construction downtown.

Financial Impact: Reported damage was \$50 million.

Impact on Fire Service: 130 firefighters fought the fire.

Impact on Surrounding Area: Fire damaged 10 surrounding buildings and caused the collapse of a construction crane. The fire comes at a time when the city is attracting new residents and investing heavily in its downtown area.

College Park, Maryland. April 24, 2017



Details: Fire at a 241-unit, nearly completed apartment complex left the building destroyed.

Financial Impact: \$51 million loss.

Impact on Fire Service: Nearly 200 firefighters involved. Largest fire in the county's history. Limited fire department access made fire more difficult to fight.

Impact on Surrounding Area: Fire shut down the University of Maryland campus and a major roadway due to heavy smoke.

Oakland, California. July 7, 2017



Details: Fire destroyed a 7-story mixed-use development that was to have 196 apartment units and 31,500 square feet of retail space.

Impact on Fire Service: Fire fought by about 80 firefighters.

Impact on Surrounding Area: Temporarily displaced 100 nearby residents.

Waltham, Massachusetts. July 23, 2017



Details: A 260-unit condo complex under construction burned to the ground.

Financial Impact: \$110 million loss.

Impact on Surrounding Area: Just a month earlier, on June 28 in the Dorchester section of Boston, an 83-unit, six-floor complex under construction was severely damaged by a fire caused by a faulty heat exhaust pipe. Many of these units were to be affordable rental housing. The 15th Annual Greater Boston Housing Report Card reports that low production of housing in the Boston suburbs has made it difficult for the region to contain housing costs. The September 14, 2017 fire in nearby Weymouth that destroyed 50 new homes added to the region's housing challenge.

Denver, Colorado. March 7, 2018



Details: A five-story, 84-unit apartment building burned, killing two construction workers and injuring six other people.

Impact on Fire Service: The massive fire was attended to by more than 100 firefighters.

Impact on Surrounding Area: Melted 30 cars parked nearby, as well as damaged surrounding buildings and displaced neighbors. Several months later, another apartment complex under construction was completely destroyed. According to a 2018 Health of Housing Report from Nationwide (blog.nationwide.com/housing/), Denver is among US cities with the steepest decline in housing affordability.

By the Numbers...

Data on fires in buildings under construction or undergoing major renovation (numbers listed are annual averages):

Timeframe: From 2010–2014

Number of Fires: 6,310

Number of Fatalities: 9

Number of Injuries: 116

Direct Property Damage: \$280 Million

Source: Richard Campbell, *Fires in Buildings Under Construction*, April 2017, NFPA.

Learn More

Contact the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute at: 202-898-0222

Visit us: 50 F Street, NW, Suite 625 Washington, DC 20001

Access additional information: nfpa.org/PolicyInstitute

This material contains some basic information about NFPA 241, *Standard for Safeguarding Construction, Alteration, and Demolition Operations*, and NFPA 1, *Fire Code*. It identifies some of the requirements in NFPA 241 and NFPA 1 as of the date of publication. This material is not the official position of any NFPA Technical Committee on any referenced topic which is represented solely by the NFPA documents on such topic in their entirety. For free access to the complete and most current version of all NFPA documents, please go to www.nfpa.org/docinfo. References to "Related Regulations" is not intended to be a comprehensive list. The NFPA makes no warranty or guaranty of the completeness of the information in this material and disclaims liability for personal injury, property and other damages of any nature whatsoever, from the use of or reliance on this information. In using this information, you should rely on your independent judgment and, when appropriate, consult a competent professional.