



MEETING EXPECTATIONS PRIORITIZING FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY CODES

In July 2017, the NFPA® Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute commissioned an independent telephone survey of more than 1,000 U.S. residents to learn about their views on government roles and responsibilities for building, fire, and life safety efforts.

Results overwhelmingly show that Americans expect and trust that government decision makers on the local, state, and federal levels are acting in the interest of safety when it comes to supporting and adopting the latest fire and electrical safety codes in homes and commercial buildings.

Recent fires and ongoing efforts by special interests to forestall safety measures like pushing for delays in the adoption of updated building and fire codes with the latest safety information, or the removal of requirements for proven safety technology like fire sprinklers or arc fault circuit interrupters, raise concerns that policymakers may be taking safety for granted.

Yet those polled believe government should be held accountable for ensuring current codes are implemented and enforced. The codes should also contain the latest safety technology and advancements, and should not be weakened by the removal of requirements.

For example:

- **81% of U.S. adults feel** policymakers should prioritize fire safety; they expect policymakers to view keeping electrical and fire safety codes up-to-date with new information and research as a high priority.
- **74% trust** their state and local leaders to adopt the latest fire and electrical safety codes for safety in residential construction; 77 percent agree this is true for commercial construction.
- **65% trust** their state and local leaders to keep codes as safe as possible and not weaken them by removing provisions that apply the latest knowledge and safety advancements.

RECENT TRAGEDIES show that these expectations are not being met. Policymakers play a key role in supporting safety. When the system that upholds safety is neglected, tragedies can result.

GHOST SHIP
Oakland, California
36 PEOPLE KILLED

A fire in December 2016 at a converted warehouse used as a living and event space that was in flagrant violation of safety codes reveals how multiple code violations and lapses in enforcement can create a deadly situation.

MARCO POLO CONDOMINIUMS
Honolulu, Hawaii
3 PEOPLE KILLED

In July 2017, a fire at an unsprinklered high-rise killed three residents. The city had explored mandating sprinkler retrofits to bring older buildings up to current safety codes. The measure, abandoned due to cost concerns, would have cost the Marco Polo building around \$4.5 million, according to local news reports. The damage from the fire is estimated at over \$100 million.

GRENFELL TOWER
London, England
71 PEOPLE KILLED

A fire quickly consumed the exterior cladding of an apartment building in June 2017. The fire revealed the critical role fire performance testing has for materials used in building construction. In some cases, authorities have removed performance test requirements from the code, citing costs.



MEETING EXPECTATIONS PRIORITIZING FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY CODES CONTINUED

TO SUPPORT SAFETY AND MEET PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS, POLICYMAKERS MUST:

Adopt current and complete codes: Codes are updated regularly at the national level to reflect the latest safety advances and should be updated regularly at the state and local level as well. Referenced standards for testing, installation, and inspection of building products and safety systems should all remain as code requirements.

Support a skilled workforce: Knowledgeable and experienced professionals, like licensed architects and electricians, are important to implementing the codes effectively. Make sure those designing and building in your community are properly trained for the job.

Provide code enforcement officials with resources they need: Make sure sufficient resources are available for people who ensure construction meets code requirements and monitor buildings for dangerous conditions.

Raise public awareness about safety risks in your community: Where we build, how we build, and our habits in our home shape the risks we face from fire and other life safety hazards. Policymakers can help citizens understand the risks and learn what they can do to reduce them.

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS:

55%
are concerned about
fire causing damage or
injury in their homes

8 in 10
adults assume their homes
met the most up-to-date
codes when constructed

86%
believe that if they purchased
a newly-constructed home
today, it would meet the
most up-to-date codes

For more information about the
NFPA Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute
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