

# Fire sprinkler systems required in 2009 International Residential Code

On Sept. 21, the voting members of the 2008 International Code Council Final Actions Hearing in Minneapolis voted to require residential fire sprinkler systems. The voting members at the ICC Hearings include building officials and fire officials from across the United States and some foreign countries.



## Code Update

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Each jurisdiction is given votes as per the population. For example, Fort Wayne gets 12 representatives from the building department and 12 votes from the fire department. Fort Wayne sent nine people representing the building department and no fire officials. Matt Sigler and Bill Fox rep-

resenting IBA, five representatives from the state Building Department and South Bend's new building commissioner were also in attendance.

During the seven days of the hearings, attendance averaged 500 people. On Sept. 20, there were just over 1,000 registered voters present at the hearings with 600 of them in the hearing room. By the 6 p.m. scheduled start for the fire sprinkler hearing, the crowd had swelled to 2,400 people and the number of registered voters had jumped to over 1,900 as a result of busloads of fire officials being brought in. As usual, the hearings were running behind schedule and were adjourned at 11 p.m. before the sprinkler items came up.

The hearings resumed the next day at 7 a.m. and continued until 2 a.m. There were seven code proposals requiring fire sprinkler systems in one and two family residences and townhouses. Two were withdrawn and the rest were approved. In effect, the Fire Sprinkler Association and the NFPA packed the hearings to take over the ICC process and force passage of these code pro-

posals. Once these proposals were passed, attendance in the room dropped back to under 700 people.

The result of the passage of these codes will have a direct impact on the cost of building affecting builders and homebuyers. RB64 stated that all one and two family residences constructed after Jan. 1, 2011 will be required to have a minimum of 13D Fire Sprinkler Systems installed. National cost estimates for a sprinkler system range from as low as \$1.61 to over \$7 per square foot. A fire sprinkler system installed in a 2,000 square foot home at a median cost of \$3 per square foot will create a \$6,000 cost increase to that home.

There were over 2,400 proposed code changes to the ICC family of codes. Some of the other proposed codes which may affect IBA members were:

\* RB68, requiring the protection of floor and roof light frame construction in homes with a 30 minute fire rated barrier (5/8 dry-wall of the ceiling of an unfinished and finished basements also ceilings of other un-

finished areas).

\* RB 173 and RB 174 requiring that any window that opens with a sill height more than 72" above grade will have a minimum sill height of 24" or a mechanical device that will restrict the window opening to 4".

\* A number of items dealing with wall bracing requirements.

\* RB207 new truss/rafter up lift requirements.

\* Many Energy Code items i.e., EC14.

\* F3 requiring fire departments to inspect residential smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, propane gas tanks and other related items when installed in an existing or new home.

IBA members will have many code issues to resolve when we review the next round of ICC codes. Do we update to the 2006 IRC or 2009 IRC? How will we address the Fire Sprinkler requirements?

These have been challenging times for builders and building associations, but we need to continue to fight for affordable homes in Indiana in the face of these new threats. We need to keep Indiana as the most affordable housing market in the country.