

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Date: July 15, 2010 **Subject:** NJ Governor Should Let Sprinklers Save Lives **Circulation:** 354,081

Editorial: Let sprinklers save lives

Given the recent grim tally of fatalities in New Jersey home fires - four people perished in one Paterson blaze alone - Gov. Christie shouldn't unduly delay a proposed mandate for fire sprinklers in all newly constructed one- and two-family dwellings. But facing a Sept. 8 deadline to act, the governor is subjecting the regulation to unnecessary further study.

If Christie misses the deadline, the regulation will lapse - likely delaying for several years any chance that New Jersey will join Pennsylvania in requiring lifesaving fire sprinklers in new homes.

Under the proposed rule, sprinklers would be required in most homes built after January 2012. The devices would represent a fraction of a home's purchase price, but pay huge dividends in lives saved.

Fire-safety experts say sprinklers provide residents precious extra minutes to escape fast-burning blazes in new homes built with today's lightweight materials. That explains the overwhelming public support for the proposal, particularly from firefighters who say sprinklers are vital to their own safety.

The state Department of Community Affairs endorsed sprinklers last year, as the key state agency overseeing such building-code changes. But with a new governor in office, the DCA has put the regulation "under review."

Department officials aren't saying that any new information has been presented on the sprinkler requirement, but that they want to ensure "due diligence in conducting as thorough a review as possible, however long that takes."

In April, Christie's red-tape review panel gave the go-ahead for the sprinkler requirement. But now the administration is silent.

Granted, the governor has plenty of other important issues before him. But that's exactly why his administration shouldn't get bogged down in a rehash of the careful work already done by a state advisory panel and state officials in recommending the sprinkler rule. There's no valid reason to subject this important lifesaving measure to death by study.

