

The Times

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Christie should mandate

home fire sprinkler systems

Gov. Chris Christie has an opportunity to address the state's growing fire problem, but has been inexplicably stonewalling the implementation of a national code that is designed to prevent fire tragedies.

In less than two weeks, six New Jerseyans were killed in three separate residential fires across the state, including four who died in an early morning fire in Paterson.

The 2009 International Residential Code (IRC), the country's primary building code, requires all newly constructed one- and two-family homes and town homes built in New Jersey after Jan. 1, 2012, to contain a fire sprinkler system. However, if Gov. Christie does not adopt the residential fire sprinkler requirement by Sept. 8, the regulation will expire and he will have failed to address the state's fire problem.

The 2009 IRC Code, including the residential fire sprinkler requirement, has been vetted by numerous code professionals and governmental agencies and received approval from the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code Advisory Board, Department of Community Affairs and Gov. Christie's own Red Tape Review Commission. Even the public voiced its overwhelming support for this regulation, sending 1,675 letters in support of the IRC codes to Trenton and only four letters against. All this life-safety requirement needs is the governor's final approval.

When the Seton Hall dorm fire killed three students in 2000, it took New Jersey less than six months to require all college dormitories, fraternities, sororities and boarding schools to be equipped with fire sprinkler systems. The state has lost at least six citizens in less than two weeks, and it is time that New Jersey adopts the national residential fire sprinkler requirement to help avoid future tragedies.

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