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MEMBER / NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOMEBUILDERS

BBRS Hearing Dec 2011 Stretch Sprinkler Code

The board is mandated to look at the cost of a code change vs. the benefit of the change. The proponents of this code change tell us that it will have little impact on the cost of a new home.

The NFPA surveyed one builder in North Andover. In their SF calculations they include basements and garages if they are sprinkled. Their costs are also a little disingenuous because they list the cost to the builder not the cost to the consumer and include only the cost of the sprinkler system. They do not include items such as water purveyor fees, additional site work, storage tanks ect.

The Home builders did a sprinkler cost survey of four members in four different towns who are installing sprinklers and included all costs attributed to the sprinkler installation. We found that in the Town of North Andover the builder we surveyed was installing systems for approximately the same cost as the NFPA's builder. But, we found that in other towns the costs were substantially higher due to other costs not included in the NFPA report.

If you take the median cost of the NFPA's home in North Andover, add to it a broker's commission, construction period interest and builder's overhead and profit it comes to \$7,600.

The home builder's survey had an average cost to the homeowner of \$13,500.

If sprinklers were installed in new homes from 1976 – 2005 the cost to the consumer would be as follows.

Using the homebuilders sprinkler cost over 7 billion dollars

Using the NFPA cost over 4 billion dollars

Using the NFPA and State Fire Marshall's statistics for fire deaths in homes with hard wired smoke detectors we might expect to save 19 lives in that 30 year period.

I have been building homes in southeastern MA since 1978. From 1978 up to and including the 6th edition of the building code I never felt the code had much of a negative impact on the cost of housing. With the adoption of the 7th edition that changed.

If we were still using the 6th edition I could build a 1900 sf colonial home anywhere in southeastern MA for \$264,500.

If these changes become part of the code that same home, if I build it within a mile of the water, in a town that has adopted the stretch codes will cost \$308,600. That is a \$44,100 or 17% increase in the cost to the consumer due solely to changes in the building code.

I urge you to please take your mandate to look at the cost of a code change seriously and stop this escalation of the cost of homes in MA as a result of changes to the building code.