

# Impact of Codes and Standards



**Create** safer communities by implementing and enforcing codes and standards, especially in the wildland urban interface (WUI) and under-served and vulnerable populations providing affordable and fire-safe housing.

## Issue

State and local governments are responsible for promoting the use and enforcement of current codes and standards. The federal government can help by incentivizing compliance and providing funding to local jurisdictions for code implementation, inspection, and enforcement. This will increase fire and life safety in our communities, especially in the WUI and among under-served and vulnerable populations.

## Impact Areas

Model building codes improve building resilience to natural disasters and save \$11 for every \$1 invested.<sup>1</sup>

All nationally recognized modern building and fire codes require the use of life-saving technology, like smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, and automatic fire sprinkler systems.

Nearly a million households live in public housing units in the United States,<sup>2</sup> and fire safety improvements in public housing must receive heightened attention. In 1992, Congress passed the Federal Fire Safety Act (15 USC 2227), requiring newly constructed multi-family housing units to have fire sprinklers. HUD estimates that approximately 570,000 multi-family public housing units are in their inventory that were constructed before the sprinkler requirement. A significant portion of these units lack the protection offered by fire sprinklers.

In buildings with automatic fire sprinkler systems, the civilian fire death rate is 89 percent lower than non-sprinklered buildings and the injury rate is 27 percent lower. Furthermore, property damage decreases significantly in buildings protected by fire sprinklers.<sup>3</sup> Investments must be made in retrofitting public housing with fire sprinkler systems.

Nearly three out of five home fire deaths are caused by fires in properties without smoke alarms or smoke alarms that failed to operate.<sup>4</sup> HUD must provide resources to public housing authorities to either retrofit housing units with hardwired smoke alarms or require the installation of tamper-resistant long-life battery-powered smoke alarms.



Philadelphia Fire Department units operating at January 2022 multi-fatality fire in the city's Fairmount neighborhood. Photo credit: PFD Community Action Team



January 9th 2022: Bronx, New York: FDNY units operating at the Twin Parks Fire. Tragically, 17 people died at this fire. However, many more were rescued by the FDNY. Photo credit: Frank Leeb

More Information



<sup>1</sup>Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2019 Report (National Institute for Building Sciences; December 1, 2019)

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing

<sup>3</sup>US Experience with Fire Sprinklers (NFPA; October 2021)

<sup>4</sup>Smoke Alarms in US Home Fires (NFPA; February 2021)



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