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**WI FIRE CHIEFS, FIREFIGHTERS, BURN SURVIVORS, ELECTRICAL & FIRE INSPECTORS
CALL ON GOVERNOR WALKER AND ADMINISTRATION TO STOP PROPOSAL THAT WILL
EXPOSE THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES TO ELECTRICAL FIRES AND ELECTROCUTION**

Groups pack statewide Safety Department hearings to voice concern that failing to expand the use of safety devices and sprinklers to 2017 requirements will make new WI homes, dormitories and hotels unsafe

MADISON – A statewide group of burn survivors, fire chiefs, firefighters and electrical inspectors today called on Governor Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) to stop an Administration plan to halt efforts that would limit and roll back the use of sprinkler systems and electrical fire and electrocution prevention devices required by the 2017 National Electrical Code (NEC).

Nearly 200 Wisconsinites in the fire services, along with electrical inspectors, burn survivors and others turned out to voice their strong opposition to the DSPS proposed electrical code changes during public hearings last week in [Eau Claire](#), [Appleton](#), [Madison](#) and today in [Milwaukee](#).

“Our role as fire chiefs and firefighters is to protect Wisconsinites from deadly fires, and make no mistake, what the Administration and its Safety Department are proposing here is going to put people in real danger and could well result in the loss of lives and other tragedies,” said Wauwatosa Fire Chief Rob Ugaste, president of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association. “While other states are modernizing their electrical safety codes and sprinkler requirements, Wisconsin is actually proposing to turn back the clock. This is a dangerous proposition that will put lives of residents and firefighters at risk, and we are respectfully asking Governor Walker and the state to do the right thing here to protect everyone.”

Under the DSPS proposal, Wisconsin would no longer require sprinkler system installation in multi-family dwellings with 20 or fewer units and go against the nationally required expansion of arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) – which prevent electrical fires – and ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) – which prevent electrocution. Home builders claim this will save money and deny there is a risk.

“There are burn survivors throughout Wisconsin who know all too well the real cost of a terrible fire, and what saddens us most are policymakers who seemingly give no consideration to the value of human life, or the emotional and financial impact of a lifetime of burn injuries,” said Amy Acton, executive director of the Phoenix Society of Burn Survivors. “This public outcry around the state represents a very real and heartfelt concern for fire prevention and safety, and hopefully the department and Governor will listen.”

Following more than a year of review, Wisconsin's Electrical Code Advisory Committee voted 9-1 recommended DSPP accept the 2017 NEC requirements, which included the expansion of AFCI and GFCI protection in dwelling units. DSPP, however, chose to remove the committee's recommendation, as well as relax existing requirements for the devices and for sprinklers in commercial buildings.

Firefighters around the state are very concerned about what will happen if the proposal moves forward.

"I've never seen this many fire chiefs and firefighters turn out in opposition to something like this – from every corner of Wisconsin – and they are basically begging state officials not to do this," said Larry Plumer, president of the Wisconsin State Firefighters Association. "Our men and women in the fire service work very hard to keep people safe and rely on these devices to prevent fires and aid in putting them out. To stop that expansion and put people at risk just so a group of home builders can make more money is shameful. Our Governor helped protect public safety on this issue a few years back, and we are all hopeful he doesn't reverse his position and continues to stand up to powerful special interests. Fire prevention should be a top priority, and this proposal will hurt the people of Wisconsin."

Earlier state efforts to pull back on fire safety regulations were halted by Governor Walker in September, 2012. If approved, this new effort would be inconsistent with the Governor's previous position, because the current proposal would significantly relax sprinkler requirements, prevent the expanded use of fire and electrocution prevention devices per the 2017 NEC, and ignore DSPP's own Electrical Advisory Committee recommendation.

Among the organizations opposing the DSPP proposal are WI State Fire Chiefs Association, Wisconsin State Firefighters Association, Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association and the International Association of Electrical Inspectors – Wisconsin.