

Full Sprinklering in Nursing Facilities Saves Lives

Action for Congress: Cosponsor fire safety legislation, the *Nursing Facility Fire Safety Act of 2009* (H.R. 1642), which would assist all nursing facilities to become fully sprinklered.

In 2003, multiple-death nursing facility fires in Connecticut and Tennessee claimed 31 lives. These tragedies have resulted in a reassessment of current national codes and standards used to regulate fire safety in nursing facilities. Subsequent to those fires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) adopted a regulation that will require all nursing homes to be fully sprinklered by August 13, 2013.

Fewer than 4,000 nursing homes are not fully protected by automatic fire sprinkler systems. The cost to retrofit these facilities will be significant, especially for providers in rural areas where inadequate access to municipal water systems would require nursing facilities to build and maintain separate water storage for use by a fire sprinkler system.

The American Health Care Association (AHCA) worked closely with both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate in developing the *Fire Safety Act of 2005*, which would have created a low interest loan program and limited “hardship” grants to assist providers who must complete retrofitting work.

Once again, AHCA is pleased to support similar legislation, the *Nursing Facility Fire Safety Act of 2009* (H.R. 1642), which was introduced by Representative John Larson (D-CT) in March 2009. The bill will protect the lives of frail, elderly, and disabled Americans who reside in our nation’s nursing homes and those who care for them.

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