



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FIRE MARSHALS

Position in Opposition of Single-Exit Stairway in Multifamily Structures

The National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) has been made aware of efforts in some local and state jurisdictions where consideration is allowing a single means of egress in multifamily buildings that are currently required by code to be provided with more than one means of egress. NASFM is very concerned that allowing multifamily structures to be constructed with certain exemptions or modifications contrary to decades of research and investigation validating the need for multiple exits will jeopardize safety. More concerning is legislating and reducing known critical life saving features by circumventing the national code development consensus process. The national code development process provides for equal, non-biased dialogue between all stakeholders to find consensus. Bypassing the code development process jeopardizes life safety of the public, building occupants and first responders.

Proper exiting, much like smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms, is known to have saved thousands of lives and have been and remain the fundamental building blocks to life safety. Layered fire prevention measures encompassing exiting, fire sprinkler systems, fire rated construction, automatic fire alarm systems, compartmentalization and the many other codes afford a reasonable level of protection. Remember the codes and standards are **minimum** requirements. Hazards include fires, explosions, hazardous materials, active shooter, natural disasters and arson to name a few. Specifically, we are asking for consideration of the following risks as it relates to this issue:

1. Providing a single means of egress places residents and firefighters in danger.
2. Many fire departments lack personnel and equipment required to combat these types of fires and evacuate large numbers of people.
3. Providing access to only a **single**-entry way for emergency forces negatively impacts rescue and fire suppression efforts especially if the single exit is obstructed, not to mention if people are escaping from that same pathway. This really diminishes the emergency responder's tactical options.
4. Many of these proposed multifamily dwellings serve our most vulnerable populations and place them at a greater risk by degrading the standard of living and life safety.
5. Nationally developed consensus codes and standards are promulgated based on real data from past tragedies to include fire deaths, injuries and large dollar losses. In addition, modern fire science and technologies are used, all to create layered protection in buildings ensuring and enhancing safety. To take parts and pieces of the code and ignore other parts will have devastating consequences.

NASFM strongly opposes any changes that are below the minimal requirements found in the national consensus codes and standards. To be more specific, we **do not** support reducing the required number of exit passage ways in multifamily dwellings as required by codes. Finally, we implore all stakeholders to continue to collaborate and find workable solutions that maintain fire and life safety as the highest priority.

(Adopted 3-1-2024 NASFM Board of Directors)