

# MEETING EXPECTATIONS

## Prioritizing Fire and Life Safety Codes

In July 2017, the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute commissioned an independent telephone survey of more than 1,000 U.S. residents to learn their views on government's roles and responsibilities for building, fire, and life safety efforts.

Results overwhelmingly show that Americans expect and trust that government decision makers on the local, state, and federal levels are acting in the interest of safety when it comes to supporting and adopting the latest fire and electrical safety codes in homes and in commercial buildings.

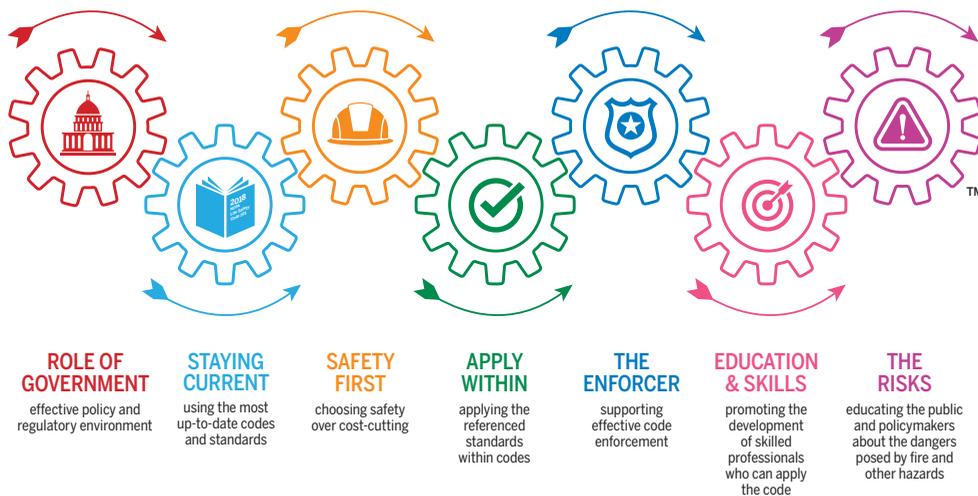
Recent fires and ongoing efforts by special interests to forestall safety measures like pushing for delays in the adoption of updated building and fire codes with the latest safety information, or the removal of requirements for proven safety technology like fire sprinklers or arc fault circuit interrupters, raise concerns that policymakers may be taking safety for granted.

Yet those polled believe government should be held accountable for ensuring current codes are implemented and enforced. The codes should also contain the latest safety technology and advancements, and should not be weakened by the removal of requirements. For example:

- » **81% of U.S. adults feel** policymakers should prioritize fire safety; they expect policymakers to view keeping electrical and fire safety codes up-to-date with new information and research as a high priority.
- » **74% trust their** state and local leaders to adopt the latest fire and electrical safety codes for safety in residential construction; 77 percent agree this is true for commercial construction.
- » **65% trust their** state and local leaders to keep codes as safe as possible and to not weaken them by removing provisions that apply the latest knowledge and safety advancements.

### The complete fire prevention and protection

## ECOSYSTEM



Policymakers play a key role in supporting and influencing the complete fire prevention and protection ecosystem relied on by the public. **RECENT TRAGEDIES** resulting in heavy loss of life, however, illustrate the consequences when there are gaps in this ecosystem.

#### **GHOST SHIP** Oakland, California 36 PEOPLE KILLED

A fire in December 2016 at a converted warehouse used as a living and event space that was in flagrant violation of safety codes, reveals how multiple code violations and lapses in enforcement can create a deadly situation.

#### **MARCO POLO CONDOMINIUMS** Honolulu, Hawaii 3 PEOPLE KILLED

In July 2017, a fire at an unsprinklered high-rise killed three residents. The city had explored mandating sprinkler retrofits to bring older buildings up to current safety codes. The measure, abandoned due to cost concerns, would have cost the Marco Polo building around \$4.5 million, according to local news reports. The damage from the fire is estimated at over \$100 million.

#### **GRENFELL TOWER** London, England 71 PEOPLE KILLED

A fire quickly consumed the exterior cladding of an apartment building in June 2017. The fire revealed the critical role fire performance testing has for materials used in building construction. In some cases, authorities have removed performance test requirements from the code, citing costs.



#### **ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS:**

**Adopt current and complete codes:** Codes are updated regularly at the national level to reflect the latest safety advances and should be updated regularly at the state and local level as well. Referenced standards for testing, installation and inspection of building products and safety systems should all remain as code requirements.



**Support a skilled workforce:** Knowledgeable and experienced professionals, like licensed architects and electricians, are important to implementing the codes effectively. Make sure those designing and building in your community are properly trained for the job.



**Provide code enforcement officials with resources they need:** Make sure sufficient resources are available for people who ensure construction meets code requirements and monitor buildings for dangerous conditions.



**Raise public awareness about safety risks in your community:** Where we build, how we build, and our habits in our home shape the risks we face from fire and other life safety hazards. Policymakers can help citizens understand the risks and learn what they can do to reduce them.

#### **PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS:**

# 55%

are concerned about fire causing damage or injury in their homes

# 8 in 10

adults assume their homes met the most up-to-date codes when constructed

# 86%

believe that if they purchased a newly-constructed home today, it would meet the most up-to-date codes



## **FIRE & LIFE SAFETY POLICY INSTITUTE**

**SAFETY THROUGH BETTER PUBLIC POLICY**

Citizens overwhelmingly trust their government leaders to support a safety ecosystem and maintain high safety standards.

Through the development of best practice recommendations, the Policy Institute will help policymakers preserve and strengthen citizens' trust that safety is a high priority in government decision making. Lack of attention to safety issues and the policies that support them not only betrays the trust citizens place in their leaders to prioritize safety, but it also increases the risk for future tragedies that could have been prevented with the right action.

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**For more information about the  
NFPA Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute  
visit [www.nfpa.org/policyinstitute](http://www.nfpa.org/policyinstitute)  
or call (202) 898-0222**

Created by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute supports policymakers around the globe in protecting people and property from fire and other hazards with best practice recommendations and approaches to develop and sustain a strong fire prevention and protection system.