



Office of the Chicago City  
Clerk



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City Council Document Tracking Sheet

**Meeting Date:** 2/15/2012

**Sponsor(s):** Balcer, James (11)  
Burke, Edward M. (14)  
Solis, Daniel (25)

**Type:** Resolution

**Title:** Call for hearing(s) on fire safety and effectiveness of fire  
sprinklers

**Committee(s) Assignment:** Joint Committee on Public Safety and Zoning, Landmarks  
and Building Standards

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Corporate Authorities of the City of Chicago are committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of Chicago's residents and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that 92% of all civilian structure fire deaths occur in residential buildings; and

**WHEREAS**, research conducted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) shows that home fires become deadly and double in size in minutes; and

**WHEREAS**, in the past 30 years, the contents of homes have become considerably more flammable because the glue, plastics and synthetic materials used in furniture and appliances burn more quickly and intensely, and produce more carcinogenic emissions; and

**WHEREAS**, according to Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., floors can collapse within 7 minutes of the start of a fire, leaving residents and firefighters injured and trapped; and

**WHEREAS**, the majority of fatal fires occur during sleeping hours and fire sprinklers can help protect our most vulnerable residents, such as infants, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, most fire deaths are caused by smoke inhalation which fire sprinklers can prevent by reducing the density and toxicity of smoke and by immediately attacking its source; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the NFPA, multi-casualty fires are exceedingly rare in buildings fully equipped with properly functioning sprinkler systems; and

**WHEREAS**, sprinkler systems are activated by intense heat at the source of the fire, not throughout the building; and

**WHEREAS**, research conducted by Factory Mutual Insurance Company shows a 98% reduction in greenhouse gases, a 97% reduction in fire damage and a 90% reduction in water usage in fires extinguished by fire sprinklers; and

**WHEREAS**, fire sprinklers often qualify home and building owners for considerable insurance discounts; and

**WHEREAS**, the potential savings to the City of Chicago in terms of insurance liability and workers' compensation in responding to a fire in a sprinklered versus non-sprinklered building is substantial; and

**WHEREAS**, all national model building codes have recognized the lifesaving benefits of fire sprinklers and have recommended residential sprinklers for all new construction; and

**WHEREAS**, 74 of Chicago's surrounding communities in Illinois have enacted fire sprinkler requirements to protect residents in newly constructed one- and two-family homes, 87 communities have applied the requirements to newly constructed townhomes, and 125 communities have applied the requirements to newly constructed multi-family residences; and

**WHEREAS**, Chicago's history is replete with devastating fires such as the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the Iroquois Theatre Fire of 1903, the Our Lady of the Angels Fire of 1958, and the Cook County Administration Building Fire 2003; and

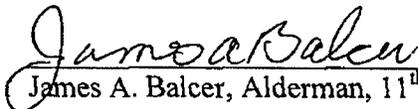
**WHEREAS**, life in Chicago has been shaped by our City's response to such tragic events and the City Council is committed to utilizing all available technology to promote fire safety; and

**WHEREAS**, the deadline for high rise residential and landmark buildings to comply with the City's Life Safety Evaluation Ordinance (13-196-206) is January 1, 2015; and

**WHEREAS**, voluntarily compliance with the City's Life Safety Evaluation Ordinance prior to January 1, 2015 would provide significant safety benefits to Chicago's residents and visitors; **NOW THEREFORE**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of the Chicago City Council do hereby encourage high rise building owners to adopt aggressive implementation schedules within which to comply with the City's Life Safety Evaluation Ordinance; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that representatives from the Fire Department, Department of Buildings and the fire safety industry are invited to appear before the Joint Committee of the Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards to testify at a hearing concerning fire safety and the effectiveness of fire sprinklers.

  
James A. Balcer, Alderman, 11<sup>th</sup> Ward

  
Edward M. Burke, Alderman, 14<sup>th</sup> Ward

  
Daniel S. Solis, 25<sup>th</sup> Ward