



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

## NEWS RELEASE

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# Efforts to Cut Building Costs Put Lives at Risk

Leading fire service groups warn against single egress stairwell proposals.

*(Journalists: Subject matter experts from the IAFF and the Metro Chiefs are available for interviews on the advisory.)*

**WASHINGTON** – The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association (Metro Chiefs) today warned fire fighters in the United States and Canada about efforts in some jurisdictions to reduce the number of stairwells in multifamily buildings. The IAFF and the Metro Chiefs are committed to defeating this misguided effort, which threatens public and fire fighter safety.

Current model code calls for at least two exit stairwells in residential buildings above three stories. Multiple stairwells allow occupants to safely exit in one direction while fire fighters set up suppression operations in the other. Efforts to cut building costs have some states and provinces considering a single means of egress (exit) in multifamily buildings up to six stories.

Limited means of egress and blocked egress can result in trapped occupants and loss of life. After the Sept. 11 attacks, the International Building Code restored stairwell widths due to the difficulties fire fighters faced climbing the narrow stairs of the World Trade Center. These stairwells impeded the exit of countless people and made rescue operations incredibly challenging.

Fire escapes and stairwells are critical to building safety. Like smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, emergency exits are key to survival in life-or-death situations. We cannot compromise on safety for the sake of cost savings. Elected officials must prioritize the safety of building occupants and first responders. Maintaining multiple stairwells is a critical, life-saving necessity.

The full advisory is attached.

## **ABOUT THE IAFF**

*The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) is the driving force behind every advance in the fire and emergency services in the 21st century. With headquarters in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa, Ontario, the IAFF represents nearly 350,000 professional fire fighters, emergency medical workers, and rescue workers. Our members protect more than 85 percent of the United States and Canada population.*

*The Metropolitan Fire Chiefs (Metro) Association brings together fire chiefs from large metropolitan fire departments to share information and focus on major issues affecting policy changes in the U.S. and abroad. Its members belong to the IAFC and NFPA and are the fire chiefs of jurisdictions with minimum staffing of 350 fully paid career fire fighters.*

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