

SUPPORT SB23-166

BUILDING FIRE RESISTANT HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

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As wildfires grow more severe and erratic in our state, they are threatening public health and safety, our communities, and wreaking havoc on local economies. We need to take action to ensure our homes and communities are resilient in the face of this new reality by building structures that can withstand unpredictable fires.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Although Colorado consistently ranks in the top five states for wildfire risk nationally, it has no statewide standards for buildings as it relates to wildfire resiliency. This is not only incredibly costly to the individual homeowner, many of which are underinsured, but also to local governments, the state, and insurance companies



Of the 10 largest wildfires in Colorado's history, **7 have occurred since 2010**

17%

of Colorado's 2.2 million homes are at **high to extreme risk of wildfire damage**



Damage from fires over just the **last 3 years** totals more than **\$2.5 billion**



Homes built in the wildland urban interface **more than doubled** from 1990 to 2020



More than **660,000 Coloradans** live in the **'highest wildfire risk areas**



Fire suppression costs for just five recent wildfires near populated areas topped **\$146 million**

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

While there is no one solution to Colorado's wildfire issues, **a first step in any thoughtful strategy is mitigation.** The list of homes, neighborhoods and communities saved from greater devastation by wildfires through mitigation is growing each fire season. One way of addressing the loss of homes, neighborhoods and whole communities is to **implement proven building codes statewide that harden new structures against wildfires.**



The National Bureau of Economic Research found that homes that met wildfire codes were 40 percent less likely to be destroyed



A National Institute of Building Science report showed homeowners saved \$4 for every \$1 invested in fire-resistant building practices on new construction



According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, adopting building codes that incorporate best practices to fire harden a home is the most effective mitigation strategy.



A national study showed real costs for constructing a 2,500 square foot single-family home and focused on roof, siding, windows and deck. When all costs were considered, the fire-resistant construction was 2 percent less expensive than typical construction

WHAT THIS BILL DOES:



Creates Wildfire Resiliency Code board made up of 21 voting members and three non-voting members from all relevant disciplines including building codes, fire safety, homebuilders, community planners, local governments, rural and urban communities, building trades, utilities, commercial buildings and property and casualty insurance.



Requires that board to define areas of the state that will be defined as within the wildland-urban interface including identification of hazards and types of buildings, entities and lands which wildfire hardening codes will apply.



Requires the board to adopt minimum codes and standards to protect life and property from the effects of wildfires.



Codifies that these new codes would apply to permitting and inspections for new construction or defensible space around structures and for construction that substantially modifies an existing structure.



Requires the board to establish an appeals process for a governing body to petition the board for a modification to the codes.



Supports local governments as they struggle with increasing costs of wildfires by helping to mitigate against the escalating costs for fire suppression and recovery after devastating community losses.

WHAT THIS BILL DOES NOT DO:



Force a one size fits all approach on local governments. Rather the wildfire code board will propose minimum standards of fire-resistant construction in areas of Colorado deemed most prone to the impacts of catastrophic wildfires.



Create additional cost for home construction, instead acknowledging that real costs for reconstructing homes and fixing fire damaged homes as well as rebuilding whole neighborhoods and communities is significantly more expensive.



Continue to wait for voluntary adoption of model code, which has been in place for wildfire mitigation for more than a decade.

SUPPORTERS OF SB23-166

- Colorado State Fire Chiefs
- Healthy Air and Water Colorado
- Colorado Rural Electric Association
- Counties & Commissioners Acting Together
- Colorado Communities for Climate Action

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