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REAL ESTATE DEPARTMENT

ALERT

VICTORY FOR BUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS: RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLER MANDATE ELIMINATED IN PENNSYLVANIA

By Kimberly A. Freimuth

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett has eliminated the residential sprinkler mandate from the statewide building code with his signature on House Bill 377. His first official act as governor is a victory for builders and developers and will help new home purchasers.

Effective Jan. 1, 2011, all new one- and two-family dwellings were required to contain fire sprinklers under Pennsylvania law. HB 377 removes that sprinkler mandate from the Uniform Construction Code but does not impact the similar requirement for town homes. The legislation is retroactive and protects new home purchasers who already had contracts and building permits.

The bill requires that prior to entering into a purchase contract, the home builder offers the consumer the option to install an automatic sprinkler system as well as provide them with information about sprinkler systems. Additionally, it includes building code provisions that enhance safety for firefighters by creating new fire floor protection standards in the event the consumer does not choose sprinklers as an option.

On April 12, 2011, the Pennsylvania Senate voted in favor of HB 377, with all proposed amendments defeated, and on April 13, 2011, the House concurred.

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