

Legislation to Promote Stronger Buildings Will Save Lives, Money

by NAMIC

WASHINGTON (June 24, 2008) — Legislation adopted today by the House Financial Services Committee is key to preventing loss of lives and property during natural catastrophes, according to the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC). The proposal provides federal funding to encourage and enforce stronger building codes at the local level.

“Strong building codes are crucial to protect homes, businesses, and lives during natural catastrophes, but cities and counties often lack the resources to enforce them,” said Justin Roth, NAMIC senior federal affairs director. “This legislation will provide much-needed funds to encourage states to promote safer buildings.”

States typically must rely on building permit fees and general funding to administer and enforce building codes, resulting in overworked and understaffed operations, Roth explained. H.R. 4461, the Community Building Code Administration Grant Act of 2007, provides \$100 million over a five-year period to help local and state authorities adopt and enforce statewide building codes.

“In addition to protecting lives and property, evidence suggests stronger building codes can also save millions of dollars for American taxpayers,” Roth said. “Research by the National Institute of Building Sciences indicates that every \$1 spent on mitigation at the federal level saves taxpayers \$4 in disaster assistance.”

The bill caps awards at \$1 million per recipient, requires recipients to match a portion of the funds received, and outlines eligible uses of the money and selected criteria with preference given to governments in financial distress.

“NAMIC founded and is working closely with the Building Codes Coalition to secure passage of this bill,” Roth said. “We commend members of the committee for their foresight in adopting the legislation, and we look forward to meeting with members of the full House as they consider this vital issue.”

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