



A COALITION OF THE NATIONAL READY MIXED CONCRETE ASSOCIATION

11.17.2017

Contact: Kevin Lawlor

[klawlor@buildwithstrength.com](mailto:klawlor@buildwithstrength.com)

202-253-6402

## Pennsylvania Senior Living Facility Devastated by Five-Alarm Wood-Fueled Blaze

*At least 20 injured, many more displaced*

**Silver Spring, MD**—A five-alarm fire forced dozens of senior citizens to evacuate a West Chester, Pennsylvania senior living center Thursday night. The Barclay Friends Senior Living Community, a group of residential-style, wood-framed buildings, was quickly enveloped as the fire swept out of control. At least twenty people were injured in the fire, and police still cannot confirm whether there were any deaths.

The fire was reported around 11PM Thursday night, and was mostly under control by 1:30AM Friday. In that time, however, the blaze did enough damage to displace dozens of residents. Witnesses described flames shooting from windows and the fire jumping from one building to the next. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Videos and pictures of the event show seniors, many wrapped in blankets, being evacuated into the night air, where temperatures hovered in the low 40s. The residents who could not walk independently were wheeled out in wheelchairs, with some wheeled out in their beds.

“This fire is not anomaly, it is part of a devastating trend of unsafe structures throughout the United States that are predictably burning down,” says Kevin Lawlor, a spokesperson for Build With Strength, a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association comprised of fire safety professionals, engineers, architects, community groups and industry experts committed to strengthening the nation’s building codes. . “When fires of this magnitude and destructive power happen this frequently, and all with the common factor of wood, we need to take a closer look at how we’re approaching construction of our residential structures. We bear the responsibility to ensure the safety of our citizens, and we can’t just keep looking the other way when something like this happens.”

The Barclay fire is one of many wood-frame fires over the last year, many of them at apartment complexes or other residential buildings. The West Chester fire comes at a time of increased visibility on the use of wood or wood-framing in structures such as these, as a number have been the site of spectacular fires recently – most notably in [Haverhill, MA](#); [Waltham, MA](#); [Charlotte, NC](#); [Warner Robins, GA](#); [Midvale, UT](#); [Oakland, CA](#); [Dorchester, MA](#); [Lawrence, MA](#); [East Hollywood, CA](#); [Lowell, MA](#); [Waterbury, CT](#); [Emeryville, CA](#); [St. Petersburg, FL](#); [Arlington, VA](#); [College Park, MD](#); [Overland Park, KS](#); [Raleigh, NC](#); and [Maplewood, NJ](#). There have been [dozens over the last few years](#).

“Our goal remains to increase safety and to spread awareness about the dangers of combustible construction materials,” says Lawlor. “We want to work with all stakeholders to keep our friends and neighbors safe.”

Learn more at [www.buildwithstrength.com](http://www.buildwithstrength.com)

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