



1.2.2018

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Portland, Oregon, Senior Housing Complex to be Constructed with Combustible Material Raises Questions About Safety

Silver Spring, MD – Following the [recently announced plans](#) that Portland, Oregon, will permit a new development geared toward seniors to be built with cross-laminated timber (CLT), a building material comprised of large panels of wood and glue-laminated beams, Build with Strength, a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association consisting of community organizations, fire service professionals, engineers, architects and industry experts committed to strengthening the nation's building codes, issued the following statement:

“Our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents deserve the peace of mind that comes with a stable and resilient home, and that means non-combustible building materials like steel and concrete. Unfortunately, certain developers in Portland have made it clear they would rather tout questionable environmental factors over security as the justification to use this wooden building material, leaving some of our most vulnerable members of the community at risk.

“There's a reason why CLT is not considered non-combustible by the International Building Code. The material's fire resistance differs from one manufacturer to the next, which leaves great uncertainty in the structural stability of the building. This could mean the difference between safely evacuating a burning building or not.

“CLT advocates claim the material has advanced fire resistance characteristics beyond traditional timber, but a [massive fire at a laboratory built with the material](#) in the U.K. in 2014 throws cold water on that notion.

“At a time when fires in large residential complexes are making the evening news with seemingly regularity, it is imperative that local developers and lawmakers build using only the strongest materials, particularly for our seniors.” - Kevin Lawlor, spokesperson for Build with Strength

In mid-November, [a five-alarm fire tore through a wooden senior living complex in West Chester, Pennsylvania](#), killing four residents and displacing more than 100 from the facility. Similarly, in late December, [a fire at a low-income housing complex in Princeton, New Jersey](#), was fatal for a 73-year-old resident and displaced 35 others.

Learn more at www.buildwithstrength.com

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