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Fifty-Plus People Displaced After Fast-Moving, 3-Alarm Blaze Torches Wooden Apartment Complex in Burlington County, New Jersey

Fire in Suburban Philadelphia Comes as New Jersey's State Legislature and Philadelphia's City Council Consider Measures to Strengthen Building Codes

Silver Spring, MD – [On Monday evening](#), firefighters were called to the scene of what quickly became a 3-alarm fire at a wood-framed apartment complex in Willingboro, New Jersey – a suburb of Philadelphia. More than 50 people were displaced in the blaze that injured one firefighter and one resident, both of who have since been released from the hospital.

The composition of buildings like the apartment complex that burned on Monday, which was constructed in 2006 and utilized lightweight wood-framing in order to provide affordable housing to Willingboro's lower-income families, is being called into question in both the state of New Jersey and the city of Philadelphia, where lawmakers are currently debating bills that would amend building codes.

In New Jersey, Assembly Bill 135 and Senate Bill 1261 have been introduced – legislation that calls for the installation of an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with NFPA 13, measuring the number of stories from the grade plane, using noncombustible materials for construction, and installing a fire barrier with a fire resistance rating of at least two hours that extends from the foundation to the roof.

This legislation has been endorsed by seven county Freeholder boards, representing nearly 50 percent of the state's population, and is supported by the local New Jersey coalition members of Build with Strength, which include: Bob Carr, the Fire Marshal for Burlington County; The New Jersey State Firefighters' Mutual Benevolent Association; The Professional Association of Fire Fighters in New Jersey; the New Jersey State Association of County Fire Marshals; New Jersey State Fire Chiefs Association; New Jersey State Fire Protection and Prevention Association; Chief "Tiger" Platt of the Brigantine Beach Fire Company; the Bricklayers and Allied Crafts – New Jersey, and the Fire Department of West Orange.

"The materials that make up a building are a fire safety matter," said Bob Carr, the Fire Marshal for Burlington County. "Combustible materials like wood, as the name suggests, simply do not have the fire prevention properties of concrete and steel. As a result, firefighters must take extra precautions when combatting fires in properties of that nature."

[In late December](#), firefighters responded to a fire at a wood-framed apartment complex in Princeton, New Jersey, that resulted in the death of a 73-year-old resident and the displacement of 35 others. The incident came after a pair of massive fires in the state in buildings constructed

with combustible materials over the past couple years – namely in [Maplewood](#) and [Edgewater](#). There have been [dozens of fires of a similar nature](#) throughout the country over the last several few years.

[A September 2016 poll](#) of 400 registered voters in New Jersey found respondents very supportive of the state making changes to building codes following the devastating Edgewater apartment complex fire in January 2015.

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