



A COALITION OF THE NATIONAL READY MIXED CONCRETE ASSOCIATION

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Built with Combustible Materials: Preventable Fire at University of Arizona, Tucson Causes \$1M in Damage

Dozens evacuated from nearby homes, officials say no injuries reported

Silver Spring, MD—A two-alarm [fire](#) swept through a student housing construction site at the University of Arizona early on Tuesday morning, causing an estimated \$1 million in damage and halting construction for the unforeseeable future. The construction site, located at East Broadway and North Tyndall Avenue, featured multiple stories and wood framing. It was intended as housing for future University of Arizona students. Though the project was originally slated for completion by autumn of 2019, no timetable for a return to construction has been offered.

The Tucson fire represents a growing trend of wood-framed, multi-story fires across the country.

“This fire is one of so many burning communities throughout the nation” said Kevin Lawlor, spokesperson for Build with Strength, a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association consisting of community organizations, fire safety professionals, engineers, architects and industry experts committed to strengthening the nation’s building codes and ensuring greater access to secure housing. “Today it was student housing in Arizona, but whatever type of housing you call home, if it’s combustible construction you are never safe from this type of destruction. We’ve seen assisted living centers, residential apartment complexes in areas of high density population, places of work, play and prayer all burn down because of an inferior construction material.”

Witnesses reported seeing smoke in the area shortly after 2AM on Tuesday morning, and Tucson firefighters responded quickly thereafter. A second alarm was called by first responders, as the blaze quickly grew unmanageable. Flames were reportedly visible from as far as Valencia road and Alvernon Way. 60 firefighters and 17 units were ultimately required to extinguish the fire.

“Even when people escape without injury or death, the cost to the community is still high,” said Lawlor. “Locals are displaced, businesses are shut down, roads are closed and first responders are put to the test.”

Captain Hector Carpio of the Tucson Fire Department reported that the intense heat from the fire melted windows, metal paneling, and palm trees at the neighboring apartment complex, and also destroyed coolers on its roof. At least 15 vehicles were damaged, and an on-site construction crane was partly melted.

Build With Strength, a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA), has launched a campaign to educate citizens, local and state officials, and industry experts about the

inherent dangers of wood-framed construction, particularly in multi-story, residential and commercial buildings. As a grassroots organization, they work with local elected officials and industry workers, from architects to project managers to advocate for the safety benefits of working with concrete-based construction.

Learn more at www.buildwithstrength.com

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