



**A COALITION OF THE NATIONAL READY MIXED CONCRETE ASSOCIATION**

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### **Build with Strength Reiterates Need for Legislation After Another Apartment Fire in Somerset County, New Jersey**

*Blaze destroyed a significant portion of the new apartments under construction*

**Somerville, NJ** — A massive fire broke out last Friday morning and severely damaged the Somerville Parc Apartments in Somerville. The fire tore through an unoccupied part of the complex on the eastern side and no injuries have been reported as of Monday. The brand-new complex was just a month away from securing occupancy permits and is now left severely damaged. Rescue squads and fire departments from Bound Brook, Bridgewater and Green Knoll helped battle the blaze.

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, highlights the need for legislation to address this devastating problem.

A250 and S2051, introduced by Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo and Senator Loretta Weinberg, will ensure that New Jersey residents will have access to affordable and safe housing at a time they need it most. Under this legislation, residents will be protected, and construction and developers will continue to thrive. The bills currently sit with the Assembly Housing Committee and Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee, respectively.

Ten county boards of freeholders, representing over 67% of the state population in New Jersey, in addition to labor groups and fire safety professionals similarly support stronger building codes and noncombustible mid-rise construction. The Somerset County Board of Freeholders will also be introducing a supportive resolution in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, this fire occurs during record high prices, increasing 130% since April, for dimensional lumber that are [raising the cost of multifamily housing units](#) over \$6000 per unit.

"This should serve as yet another call to action for the New Jersey Legislature," said S2051 sponsor and Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg. "Our communities are suffering as a result of unsafe building practices in the mid-rise market. It is time that we put an end to these practices to ensure that our communities are safer and more resilient. The legislature should advance A250 and S2051 so that future generations have safer housing."

The type of fire in Somerville is an all too common occurrence with the recent increase in the development of mid-rise apartment buildings using wood construction. These fires are particularly common when the buildings are under construction due to an increased exposure of the wood to exterior elements. In January, Bound Brook suffered a similar [fire](#) and the community is still trying to recover.

New Jersey has been particularly exposed to these high-profile fires in recent years due to the use of lightweight wood construction materials. Both the [Avalon at Edgewater](#) and [Highland Park](#) fires were among the largest and drove communities to take action on the ways in which these buildings are structured.

Build with Strength works with communities, lawmakers, and industry employees to advocate for safer, sustainable building materials. Strengthening local and national building codes is among the organization's top priorities.

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

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