

July 20, 2009

Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chairman
Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Bingaman and Murkowski,

Thank you for convening the hearing today on wildland fire issues, to call attention to this critically important issue.

While the issue of wildland fire should never be set aside, the timing is near perfect to again remind and ignite public and political interest in the matter. Billions of dollars are being spent annually to protect the lives and infrastructure of the more than 100 million people, in 65,000 communities, living in wildfire prone areas (the wildland/urban interface, or WUI).

The International Code Council (Code Council) is the proactive leader in promoting WUI fire community planning as well as wildfire/urban interface code adoption. The Code Council has a solid working relationship with over 50 National organizations that support working together on this important issue. We publish the only code that deals directly with this issue, the 2009 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC).

In an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of current WUI efforts, the Code Council took the lead in establishing the National Blue Ribbon Panel on Wildland /Urban Interface to evaluate current fire prevention programs and education. The Panel found that very few homeowners and communities are equipped with appropriate knowledge or plans to handle a wildland fire crisis. Current efforts by government agencies, states and local jurisdictions, while beneficial, have not shown substantial reductions in the numbers of fires, homes destroyed or costs incurred.

The Code Council promotes the adoption and enforcement of building and fire safety codes that will better equip WUI homeowners during a fire event. Currently, less than 10% of WUI communities have any kind of fire code. The Code Council wishes to promote code adoption, enforcement and better inter-agency relations between the private sector, local, state and federal agencies.

The Code Council is available to the Committee and its staff at any time to provide information and resources to help deal with this issue. If the Committee staff would

like complimentary copies of the 2009 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code,
please contact me.

Best Regards,

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