



**Statement of the National Association of State Fire Marshals
On the Need to Keep Code Enforcement Activities
Free From Political Influence**

Building and fire codes, as well as codes for specific systems in and around buildings, generally specify minimum acceptable levels of safety for structures in a jurisdiction. Their purpose is to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the public where people live, learn, work, play and worship. These codes also help to protect the safety of emergency personnel who would respond in the case of fire or other natural or manmade disasters.

Codes become the **law** of a jurisdiction when formally **enacted** by the appropriate governmental authority. But these safety codes are only as effective as the extent to which they are complied with. Compliance is achieved only with proper, diligent and consistent enforcement to reduce hazards and thereby reduce risk.

Individuals who are designated by their jurisdiction or other authority as code enforcement officials have a firm responsibility and obligation to uphold the safety of the public and of emergency responders. They accomplish a significant portion of this duty by ensuring compliance with the relevant codes using their best professional evaluation and judgment. As such, code enforcement officials must have the fullest support from their management and their jurisdiction to do their jobs, unimpeded or restricted by political considerations, and without fear of reprisals or negative repercussions. Code enforcement must not be selectively applied, and correction notices, citations or other corrective actions must not be reduced or set aside in order to avoid negative consequences resulting from unpopular decisions.

Codes and standards are adopted by jurisdictions and supported by communities and society as a whole with the understanding that they are applied and enforced equally in all situations for the betterment of all. In short, safety must never be traded off and politics should never be allowed to undermine the laws a jurisdiction has adopted to protect its citizens, its visitors and its emergency responders.

*Approved by the Board of Directors, National Association of State Fire Marshals
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