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 **Advocacy Digest | March 23, 2021**

 **Brad Boycks, Executive Director**

**Multifamily Sprinkler Requirements**

The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) recently announced that as of **April 19, 2021,** they would again be requiring an automatic fire sprinkler system in any multifamily building of three units or more.

This decision comes after Attorney General Josh Kahl released an opinion that reversed a previous opinion by former Attorney General Brad Schimel concerning an administrative rule being more restrictive than a state statute.

To make things even more confusing, a section of the commercial building code that has been enforced since late 2018, requires two means of egress from every room. Several members have reported this code prevision has been used to require sprinkler systems in multifamily units of 20 or fewer units.

If you have been getting multifamily units of 20 or fewer approved without a sprinkler system because you have complied with the means of egress requirements, you need to get those plans approved before April 19, 2021.

The Wisconsin Builders Association (WBA) is currently exploring all options on how to proceed with the new DSPS policy and the new Kahl AG opinion.

**POWTS Bill has Hearing in State Senate Committee**

Recently, a bill to provide two additional DSPS employees to review POWTS plans had a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. The bill was later voted out of committee on a bipartisan 5-0.

WBA is advocating that this bill has a vote before the full State Senate when they meet in mid-April.

# From NAHB: [A Full-Court Press on Lumber](https://nahbnow.com/2021/03/a-full-court-press-on-lumber/)

NAHB continues to move rapidly and aggressively to engage the Biden administration on lumber and to urge policymakers to take immediate action to address skyrocketing lumber prices and supply shortages that are harming home builders, home buyers, remodelers, and the economy.

This week, letters were sent to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and the U.S. Forest Service Chief Victoria Christiansen that addressed NAHB’s urgent concerns on this issue and recommended key strategies to ease lumber price volatility and boost supply.

Last week, NAHB spearheaded an effort that led to 35 organizations signing onto a joint letter to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo urging the secretary to “examine the lumber supply chain, identify the causes for high prices and supply constraints, and seek immediate remedies that will increase production.”

The letter to Agriculture Secretary Vilsack urged him to include the lumber supply chain in a report to the White House regarding President Biden’s [executive order to secure supply chains for critical and essential goods](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/24/executive-order-on-americas-supply-chains/).

“Thank you for your efforts to examine America’s agricultural supply chains,” the letter stated. “We respectfully encourage you to include the lumber supply chain in your review and report to President Biden. We stand ready to work with you to ensure American consumers and home builders have a reliable, affordable supply of lumber to meet housing demand.”

The message to U.S. Forest Chief Christiansen noted that “improving the health of our nation’s forests and increasing the supply of domestic timber are not mutually exclusive goals, and we strongly urge you to maintain current harvesting plans for the National Forest system.”

“Better forest management practices will not only promote the health of our nation’s forest system but also improve housing affordability,” the letter stated. “As additional supply of domestically produced timber is brought into the market, upward pressure on lumber prices will soften.”

View the full text of all the lumber letters, including one sent to President Biden in January, [here](https://www.nahb.org/advocacy/top-priorities/material-costs/outreach-to-the-administration-and-congress).

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| **Contact Your Member of Congress on Soaring Lumber Costs** |
| Housing’s potential to lead the economy forward is limited as long as lumber remains expensive and scarce. Congress needs to push the administration to undertake a thorough examination of the lumber supply chain, identify the causes for high prices and supply constraints, and seek immediate remedies that will increase production. Since the U.S. does not produce enough lumber to meet domestic needs, Congress can do its part to boost domestic production by doing a better job of more actively managing federal forest lands in an environmentally sustainable manner.  Lawmakers should also urge the White House to make it a priority to work with Canada on a new softwood lumber agreement that would end tariffs that are contributing to extreme price volatility.  Learn more about NAHB's efforts to provide relief for rising material costs [here](http://send.nahb.org/link.cfm?r=8CDqQ-BA-R_j2ndO_mLbcg~~&pe=CBIk0rCOUMI8Wuc1FjVntr1_2kiHfFe8ReWT2Ev9GQwXl90g2TAUpcFLzNOJmL1VhO_nhT-6mfYOaOQEG5GRcg~~&t=YPZSQvpc_xyvOyBqtRS62Q~~).   |
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| [**Contact Your Congress Member**](http://send.nahb.org/link.cfm?r=8CDqQ-BA-R_j2ndO_mLbcg~~&pe=c-dpaof5DvrfnEamyVqxWuwftOYiA04VKSt3egd69OrD8JtI-8FSfznznxXb_jwsmeXXO81C5H4VxhZM394j8A~~&t=YPZSQvpc_xyvOyBqtRS62Q~~) |

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