



May 11, 2015

The Honorable Joseph D. Morelle
New York State Assembly
LOB 926
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblyman Morelle:

We write to applaud you for your continued leadership on protecting New York families from tragic fires. In the last session, we supported your bill to require battery operated smoke alarms to be powered by a sealed battery with the capacity to operate for a minimum of ten years because all too often homeowners do not change the batteries to keep them in working order. The development of this new smoke alarm technology is important. AB3057-A introduced in this session is important. We cannot stop there.

The very recent tragedy involving the Sassoon family in which seven children ages 5 to 16 perished in a fire in their Brooklyn home is a harsh reminder of this. The fire occurred in an Orthodox Jewish family apparently because a hot plate, which the family left on to honor the Sabbath, shorted and caused a fast moving fire in the ninety-year-old family home constructed largely with wood. There was a smoke alarm in the basement but, even if it was operable, it did not, and would not have alerted the family upstairs.

It is hard for the law to prevent fires in single family homes, but there are steps we can take in addition to the 10-year smoke alarm requirement. They include:

- Requiring owners of multi-family dwellings to install latest technology smoke alarms. A law to this effect was passed by the New York City Council;
- Requiring installation of smoke alarms when a major renovation of a home takes place;
- Providing resources to firefighters and other appropriate agencies and organizations to provide awareness to homeowners, especially in areas with homes prone to fires.

Safe Kids' mission is to prevent unintentional injuries involving children, the number one killer of kids 19 and under. House fires are preventable.

Fires and burns are the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 5 to 15 and 52% of all child fire deaths involve those 4 and younger. One of the best methods to reduce home fire fatalities is the installation of working smoke alarms on every floor to provide early detection. In fact, The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that nearly two-thirds of home fire deaths result from fire in properties without smoke alarms or without working alarms, mainly due to dead or missing batteries. The importance of using the 10-year smoke alarms was underlined in a 2012 survey by Kelton Research of U.S. homeowners which revealed that:

- 58% didn't know that batteries should be changed every six months;
- 68% believe that the need to replace batteries should happen less often;



- 61% of respondents say they allowed their alarm to be inoperable because of a non-working battery.

We stand ready to help you pass AB3057–A and hope to work with you to pass other provisions to help families mitigate preventable deaths in house fires. We agree with you that a key solution is to require smoke alarms with the ten-year capacity. These alarms offer continuous protection for the life of the alarm without the worry of a battery dying. In addition, they save money in the long term. A ten-year smoke alarm may cost a little more upfront, but consumers recover this cost within a few years, saving approximately \$30-60 on batteries over the lifetime of the new alarm. Consumers will also be gaining peace of mind knowing that their house and family are covered for ten years.

You can count on us to support AB3057–A in any way we that we can. We look forward to working with you in other ways to protect families from devastating fires.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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