

A MESSAGE FROM LONG HILL TOWNSHIP FIRE MARSHAL DON HUBER

THE LONG HILL TOWNSHIP FIRE MARSHAL is responsible under State law and pursuant to our Township Municipal Code to enforce the tenets of the NJ State Uniform Fire Code as prescribed in N.J.A.C. Chapter 5, Title 70.

But what does that actually mean? To properly answer that question, let's start with a brief history...

Subsequent to fatal fires in a boarding home and an amusement park, both of which occurred in Monmouth County in the early 1980's and that jointly took the lives of over 70 citizens, Governor Brendan Byrne called for the establishment of the NJ Fire Safety Commission. The Commission was tasked with the study and evaluation of fire safety and prevention measures in the State and, after a series of public meetings, concluded among other things that:

- The presence of fire safety codes in our municipalities was fragmented, inadequately enforced, and limited by serious financial constraints.
- While some municipalities adopted fire codes, others did not, and there was no statewide minimum standard governing all existing buildings, use, storage, processes, etc.
- The pattern of development in the State was such that many of the buildings and occupancy uses presenting considerable risks of life and property loss due to fires were located in or near municipalities not readily prepared or equipped to mitigate such events.
- Recent multiple-fatality fires in New Jersey and beyond underscored the requirement for a relevant and comprehensive state fire safety code designed as the minimum standard for the maintenance and upgrades of existing properties throughout the State.

As a result, and following in the footsteps of his predecessor, in 1984 Governor Tom Kean signed into law N.J.A.C. Chapter 5 Title 70, the Uniform Fire Safety Act, creating the Bureau of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and assigning it as the state agency responsible for the enforcement of the newly-formed state fire code. As part of this Act, each municipality would be required to establish a Local Enforcement Authority (LEA) either by an appointment by the governing body of a State-Certified Local Fire Official (a.k.a. Fire Marshal) or by an arrangement with another political subdivision, i.e. another municipality, a fire district, a county, or in some cases, the state itself.

Later in 1994, with its functions and duties significantly increased, the Bureau was elevated to the Division of Fire Safety under Governor Jim Florio, further establishing the New Jersey Fire Safety Commission as an advisory body to the Commissioner of the DCA; but the *core mission of fire prevention and life safety by standardized code enforcement did not change.*

In order to minimize any impact on local property taxes, it was further provided by virtue of the Act that local enforcement authorities would be funded through a fee-based structure in which local businesses would pay an annual registration fee, an amount that would vary based on a number of variables such as overall size, square footage, amount of floors, types and amounts of storage or processes, and use of the structures.

Other revenues payable to the LEA include fees for fire permits, home-sale and change-in-tenancy inspections, fines, and penalties for non-compliance of Notices to Correct Fire Code Violations.

Today in Long Hill, the Fire Marshal conducts annual and periodic fire inspections of businesses, performs fire investigations, facilitates home-sale and change-in-tenancy fire inspections, issues fire permits, provides fire safety education programs in schools and to the public at large, responds to complaints and inquiries, and works in cooperation with all local, county, and state agencies in the continuing public safety interests of our residents, business community, visitors, and our courageous and dedicated emergency responders.

To learn more about fire safety in your home or place of business, or for other assistance with your questions or concerns, please contact me at 908-647-8000, Ext. 307 or fireofficial@longhillnj.com.

THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO SERVE YOUR FIRE SAFETY NEEDS

Don Huber, Fire Marshal