



NATIONAL ELECTRICAL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
Low Voltage Distribution Equipment Section

October 6, 2009

California Building Standards Commission
Attention: Dave Walls, Executive Director
2525 Natomas Park Drive, Suite 130
Sacramento, CA 95833

Re: Review of 2008 National Electrical Code

Dear Mr. Walls,

California residents deserve the safest homes possible. The California Building Standards Commission can help ensure this by supporting the adoption of the 2008 *National Electrical Code*[®] (*NEC*[®]) and all of the updated safety codes contained within it.

The *NEC*[®] is the country's most universally adopted installation code, with a more than 100-year track record of providing electrical safety for millions of Americans through regular and thorough revisions that incorporate the latest in safety technology – with minimal cost impact.

Among the code updates featured in the 2008 *NEC*[®] is an expanded requirement for an innovative safety device called an arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI). An AFCI is an electronic circuit breaker that detects and prevents arc faults – a leading cause of electrical fires in the home and a condition that standard circuit breakers do NOT detect. California currently requires installation of AFCIs in bedrooms of new homes, but the 2008 *NEC* expanded requirement for the combination AFCI to additional living areas will give the home's electrical system a level of protection no other device can provide – clearing the way for a potentially dramatic decrease in the number of electrical fires that occur annually.

The most important decrease however, may be in the number of lives saved, not only those of homeowners, but those of firefighters who risk their lives to combat these fires. Each year in the U.S., home electrical fires kill about 360 people, injure more than 1,000 and destroy close to \$1 billion in property.

Earlier this year, the Department of Housing and Community Development put its stamp of approval on the 2008 *NEC* by recommending the state adopt, among others, the requirement for AFCIs. It's my hope that the Building Standards Commission upholds that recommendation and works to help ensure all California homes are built with the most up-to-date safety standards in place.

Fire and electrical experts agree that AFCIs are a technological leap forward in home safety and can have a significant impact on the safety of California homes. Its expanded use as outlined in the 2008 *NEC* has the full support of a growing list of prominent fire and electrical safety groups. This list includes, among others, the National Fire Protection Association, the Electrical Safety Foundation International, the International Association of Electrical Inspectors, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, the Independent Electrical Contractors Association and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). In fact, the CPSC believes that AFCIs, if installed in all homes, could prevent more than 50 percent of the 68,000 electrical fires that occur every year.



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With this mind, I respectfully ask the Commission to review the facts concerning AFCI expansion and the other important code updates featured in the 2008 NEC, and to support the recommendation of the Department of Housing and Community Development to adopt these standards in California.

The adoption of this updated set of safety standards will bring California to the forefront of electrical safety and have a profound effect on homeowners – preventing the loss of lives and property while saving millions of tax dollars used to battle residential fires.

We appreciate your devotion and hard work in making California a safer place to live.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerard Winstanley".

Gerard Winstanley
Program Manager
The National Electrical Manufacturers Association