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Fire safety issue of public hearing Friday in Beckley

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Fire and electrical safety advocates from across the state will voice their support Friday in Beckley for expanding the state's requirement for an electronic circuit breaker designed to prevent home electrical fires.

The National Fire Protection Association, the Fire Marshals Association of West Virginia and the Electrical Safety Foundation International are calling upon the West Virginia State Fire Commission to expand the use of arc fault circuit breakers, a move that would make all new homes built in West Virginia among the safest in the U.S. from electrical fires, officials said.

The public hearing is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. at Comfort Inn & Suites, 2120 Harper Road.

"Home fire safety always needs to be the priority of every citizen, including public officials," said Lt. Ken Tyree of the Charleston Fire Prevention Bureau and president of the FMAWV.

"We in West Virginia experience too many deaths and injuries in electrical fires in bedrooms and common rooms. This new code would provide another tool to use in the fight against home fires and deaths. In my opinion, the expanded use of AFCIs could prevent fires and save lives. I want to work with the State Fire Commission to research this standard and provide information to them about moving in this direction."