



Fire chiefs: New building code will save homes, lives

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DURHAM, N.C. — Builders in North Carolina will be required to install advanced electronic circuit breakers in all new homes, beginning in January, for added protection.

The arc fault circuit interrupters, or AFCIs, detect and prevent arc faults, a leading cause of electrical fires, authorities said. Arc faults are caused by damaged wiring, worn or overheated electrical cords and damaged appliances, and their high temperatures easily ignite surrounding materials, authorities said.

Electrical problems cause more than 70,000 house fires annually in the U.S., resulting in close to 500 deaths and \$1 billion in property damage, authorities said.

The North Carolina Building Code Council recently expanded the state requirement to install AFCIs in bedrooms of new homes, and the devices will have to be installed in other rooms as well.

Area fire chiefs, fire marshals and electrical inspectors praised the new requirement during a Thursday news conference at Durham Fire Station No. 1.

"I've seen first-hand the destructive result of electrical fires and the devastating impact they have on homeowners and their loved ones," Raleigh Fire Chief John McGrath said in a statement. "Homes are destroyed, families are displaced, memories are lost and lives are put at risk. Once the expanded code takes effect, I'm hopeful homeowners can rest a little easier knowing their home is equipped with the most advanced protection available."