Recently there have been two high profile fires at apartment complexes under construction (Dorchester & Waltham) that used wood framing and manufactured wood floors. These fires have prompted negative comments from some fire fighters, legislators, and local building code officials concerning the use of wood framing for multifamily complexes.

We expect to see some attempts made to limit the use and/or size of multifamily structures using wood framing. So far, the Waltham City Council unanimously voted to instruct their legislators to file legislation seeking to limit the use of wood frame construction in certain medium sized apartment projects. We will be on the watch to see if any legislation is amended or introduced that contains this kind of language and will advise the MRLDA membership as more information becomes available.

If the media contacts any member concerning this issue, you can ask them to contact Jeff Keller at NRLA either by phone, 518.880.6376, or by email, jkeller@nrla.org.

If any member decides to take a press inquiry, below are some basic talking points that we have prepared to assist you.

- We are glad that nobody was seriously hurt in either of these fires. We appreciate the great work that the local fire departments did in containing these fires and we wish the firefighters that suffered minor injuries putting these fires out a speedy recovery.
- While the cause of these fires is still being investigated, it is important to note that these fires were not started due to wood framing being used. Multifamily housing that uses other forms of framing suffer this type of damage from fires as well.
- While attention needs to be paid to these multifamily housing structures while they are being built, once the proper fire suppression and safety systems are installed, as required by the Building Code, they are as safe as structures built with steel or concrete, but are more environmentally friendly and more affordable.
- The focus should be on proper standards and safety while multifamily housing is being constructed and making sure that these buildings become equipped with the proper fire suppression and safety systems that are required by the Building Code.
- We are more than willing to work with local governments, code officials, and the state to devise plans to better monitor the safety standards of wood frame multifamily housing under construction, but restricting or banning the use of wood framing in multifamily housing would only make housing less affordable and environmentally friendly.