



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins & Assemblywoman Schimel: Truss Notification Bill Passed by State Legislature

JACK M. MARTINS June 24, 2014

| ISSUE: **FIREFIGHTERS**

Senator Jack M. Martins (R-Mineola) and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel (D-Great Neck) announced that legislation they sponsored to help protect volunteer firefighters has been passed by the State Legislature. The legislation (S6675C/A1869D), which passed with broad bipartisan support, would help save firefighters from the early collapse of residential structures by establishing a truss construction notification system for residential properties.

Truss-style construction is very safe and durable but is more susceptible to collapse when exposed to and weakened by fire, often suddenly without warning. When responding to a fire, first responders are unable to differentiate between a building constructed of truss or another type of construction. As a result, in recent years, the collapse of residential truss structures, such as roofs and floors, has been the cause of many preventable injuries and deaths among first responders, especially firefighters.

“This legislation is about saving lives. Firefighters need as much information as possible at a fire scene to fight that fire safely and effectively. Both parties, our fire departments, and our local governments all agree; creating this notification system will be invaluable to protecting our local heroes. I thank them for working with us on this bill and urge the

Governor to sign it,” said Senator Martins.

“This legislation will save first responders lives, particularly firefighters. On Long Island there have been a number of incidences where firefighters were almost killed while responding to a residential fire in a home where truss construction was utilized. The notification system established by this legislation will enable first responders to take appropriate measures to protect the public and to ensure their own safety when responding to a fire emergency. I urge the Governor to sign this bill into law,” said Assemblywoman Schimel.

Under the measure, which is very similar to the state’s existing commercial truss notification law, a municipality’s building department would be required to notify the local fire chief when it receives a permit application for the construction or modification of a residence utilizing truss construction. The local code enforcement official would be required to consult with the local 911 servicer, emergency dispatchers, and the local fire protection provider, to determine the manner sufficient to warn persons conducting fire control and emergency operations in the area where the residential structure is located. This coordination will enable dispatchers to alert responding fire units prior to their arrival at the scene of the fire that the residence has structural truss components. Property owners would also affix a small, non-invasive decal to the electric box on the exterior of the house to notify firefighters.

This past January, more than 100 firefighters from area fire departments were on the scene to help fight a basement fire at a two-story house in the Village of North Hills. Firefighters from the Manhasset-Lakeville Fire Department entered the basement of the 5,000 square foot house to fight the fire, but were forced to evacuate within minutes when the first floor began to separate from the walls of the home. Within 45 seconds of the last firefighter evacuating the house, the first floor collapsed into the basement.

“I thank Assemblywoman Schimel and Senator Martins for listening to the safety needs of firefighters from across Long Island and through their tireless leadership, getting this important legislation introduced and passed by our New York State Assembly and New York State Senate. This simple process of notification of wood truss and lightweight wood construction and the noninvasive decal on the home's electric box will go a long way to assist and advise firefighters when arriving at the scene of a house fire that utilizes this type of construction. Most importantly this notification law will be another tool to help ensure that all of our New York State firefighters stay safe and are able to return home to their families when the fire is extinguished,” said Michael F. Uttaro, Assistant Chief Fire Marshal, Nassau County Fire Marshal's Office.

“I am pleased that the NYS Legislature has passed the Truss Notification bill, which, when signed, will go a long way to protect all the Firefighters in New York State. It is important that firefighters have advanced notification when fighting a fire in this type structure, which is prone to sudden collapse without warning. Once this type of structure is finished, it is impossible to recognize the difference between this and other types of construction. This important fire safety legislation enables firefighters to take precautions when encountering a serious residential fire using this type construction. I am also pleased New York State is leading the way for firefighter safety. Congratulations to Senator Martins, Assemblywoman Schimel, and all the State Legislators,” said Owen W. Magee, Ex-Chief of the Hicksville Fire Department.

“This legislation would protect the safety of our emergency services personnel who risk their lives for us should they find themselves entering a building utilizing this type of construction. If putting a simple sticker near an electrical meter can potentially save a firefighter's life, we should do it. I thank Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel for getting this legislation passed and I urge Governor Cuomo to approve it,” said Mineola Mayor

Scott Strauss. The Village of Mineola recently enacted its own local law which is very similar to the one proposed by Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel.

"As construction materials change and advance so must the techniques used to fight fires and protect firefighters. This is an extremely valuable tool that will provide critical information upon arrival and will directly impact the strategy to fight the fire. I congratulate Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel for their forward thinking and dedication to protecting first responders," said Jeff Clark, Chief of the Mineola Fire Department.

The legislation will be sent to Governor Andrew Cuomo for consideration.