



Joseph R. Sastre
President
Town of Groton

February 14, 2017

Michael A. Spera
Vice President
Town of Old Saybrook

**Testimony in support of Senate Bill 772 – An Act Requiring Emergency Generators In
Certain Housing For The Elderly.**

Holly June Jacobs
Treasurer
Town of Manchester

Distinguished members of the legislative Aging Committee,

Joel P. Severance
Secretary
Town of Chester

The Connecticut Emergency Management Association, a statewide organization of municipal Emergency Management Directors and emergency management professionals in the private sector and academia, strongly supports Senate Bill 772, an act requiring emergency generators in certain housing for the elderly, with only a couple of caveats as noted below.

Bruce Lockwood
Past President
East Hartford

Due to advances in technology and medicine, our elderly citizens are more dependent on electricity than ever before. Today, those with complicated medical conditions can live comfortably at home rather than in a nursing home or hospital due to the medical devices that are available for home use. Today, our elderly citizens do very well and remain independent with their oxygen generators, home dialysis machines and other devices. When the power goes out however, their lives can take on a drastic change for the worse.

Having a reliable source of power will enable our senior citizens to “weather the storm” from the comfort of their home without having any concerns about lack of heat or air-conditioning. They will be able to prepare their own food and take care of their medical issues. Most importantly, our seniors will not have to worry about picking up their belongings, medicines, medical devices and going to an emergency shelter just because of a lack of power.

CEMA is concerned however with the proposed requirement to provide “a minimum of four to twelve hours of sufficient power to each unit for heating, water, lighting and any other critical mechanical equipment.” CEMA suggests removing the language referencing a four to twelve hour minimum. Establishing a minimum requirement in this manor will encourage only a four hour power supply, when our experience has shown that power outages can last much longer.

CEMA also recommends modifying the language to require full building generator power, removing any discussion or opinions on what “critical mechanical equipment” may be. For example, would an elevator be considered critical mechanical equipment when stairwells are available? Does the “critical mechanical equipment” include a resident’s medical device? For the sake of the residents, CEMA believes both the elevator and the medical device certainly are critical, but the owner of a housing development may interpret the requirement differently.



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CEMA therefore suggests the following language be substituted in the proposed bill. "Any public housing project consisting of not less than one hundred units for elderly persons shall install and maintain one or more emergency power generators capable of providing full electrical power to each unit to include heating, air conditioning, hot water and full residential electrical service for the duration of any power failure....."

CEMA fully recognizes that this proposal may impose a cost to the owners of existing elderly housing units and will increase the cost of future housing to be built. Most of the costs involved would be a one-time investment to support the installation of the generator and associated wiring while on-going maintenance costs would be minimal. As municipal Emergency Management Directors, we spend a lot of time speaking with our residents, especially the elderly. Their biggest concern is always power outages and the potential need to leave their residences for emergency shelters to have their needs taken care of by others. We have seen many instances where our seniors will try to "tough it out" by staying home during a power outage only to suffer the consequences of cold, heat and/or lack of access to their medical requirements. Our elderly citizens really desire, and deserve, a reliable source of power so they can remain in the comfort of their own surroundings and remain independent during a loss of commercial power. CEMA believes that requiring generator backup power for senior housing will make those housing units more attractive to the elderly, increasing their marketability and reduce vacancy rates for those who operate said housing. Passage of this bill will ensure that our senior citizens can continue to remain in the comfort and familiarity of their own homes, independently, the way they prefer to live the rest of their lives.

On behalf of the members of the Connecticut Emergency Management Association, I would like to congratulate you on this proposed bill to support our elderly citizens and thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding CEMA or this testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Sastre, President

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