



# Memorandum

TO: RULES COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Ken Yeager

SUBJECT: Fire Safety Measures

DATE: May 27, 2005

APPROVED:

DATE: 5-31-05

**SUBJECT: Fire safety measures in apartment complexes**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Direct Fire Department staff to work with Councilmember Yeager's office to convene a series of meetings with stakeholders, including apartment building owners, residents, representatives from the Tri-County Apartment Association and the Home Builders' Association, to recommend measures to improve fire and life safety at the Glen Willow Apartments and other similar buildings throughout the City, and to bring these recommendations back to the full Council for consideration.

**BACKGROUND:**

On March 23, 2005, there was a six-alarm fire at a large apartment complex in Willow Glen. Fighting that fire was very complex and hazardous due to the size of the building, the number of residents, and the design of the building. All of the apartment front doors opened into the hallway, and once the corridor was filled with smoke, the firefighters had to maneuver through what was essentially a long horizontal chimney. The residents had to be evacuated through the same hallways, compounding the problem. The building had very limited access for Fire personnel, and no sprinklers or standpipes. In addition, fire alarm did not work and could not alert residents of the fire. Due to the age of the building, many of the new required life-safety systems were not required at the time of construction. This fire occurred just two months after an apartment fire at the Pinewood Terrace Apartments in District 7 that had nearly identical problems.

**DISCUSSION:**

As a result of what we have learned from the Glen Willow fire, I recommend that the City take appropriate measures to prevent such tragedies in the future. Our residents are concerned about the need for improvements and are supportive of fire safety modifications. These recommendations are also critical for improving the working conditions for our firefighters.

**COORDINATION:** This memo has been coordinated with the Fire Department.