



Dear Members,

Today Governor Healey announced next steps to enhance resident safety in ALRs, in a press release including comment from Mass-ALA. Please review the full release below, as it includes important data and regulatory information about the Fire and Life Safety Initiative, so you can be prepared for subsequent communications and work with AGE and Local Fire Departments.



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Governor Healey Announces Next Steps to Enhance Resident Safety in Assisted Living Residences

BOSTON – Governor Maura Healey today released the results of a Fire and Life Safety survey of all 272 Assisted Living Residences (ALRs) in Massachusetts and announced additional action to enhance the safety of residents at ALRs across the state. In July, following the tragic fire at Gabriel House in Fall River, Governor Healey announced [immediate measures](#) to strengthen fire and life safety in Assisted Living Residences (ALRs) across Massachusetts, including requiring all 272 ALRs in the state to complete a Fire and Life Safety Self-Assessment Survey and submit their site-specific Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plans. The survey received a 100 percent response rate.

“The Gabriel House fire was a terrible tragedy. It’s on all of us to do everything we can to enhance the safety of all residents and staff at Assisted Living Residences across the state. That’s why I took immediate action after the fire, including requiring this survey which will help ALRs and local fire departments identify and address areas of improvement,” said **Governor Healey**. “We appreciate all of the ALRs for their responsiveness and will continue to work with them and local fire officials to improve emergency preparedness and give residents, families and staff the peace of mind they deserve.”

The findings, reviewed by the Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE) in collaboration with the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), highlight key areas of focus related to building age and additional best practice safety features. It is important to note that ALRs are residential buildings and are not subject to the same building and fire codes as nursing homes or hospitals.

The vast majority of residences reported strong preparedness measures, and about 13 percent (36 residences) indicated opportunities to further strengthen their approach to fire drills, mutual aid plans, or emergency coordination protocols. These responses provide a

roadmap for additional targeted support and technical assistance, and corrective action where needed.

Certain ALRs operate in older buildings that may not have undergone recent major renovation, and 69 percent (189 residences) self-identified at least one area of opportunity to align with best practices for fire or building safety — such as installing a kitchen hood extinguisher, fire pumps, or fire-rated walls. Since ALRs are not licensed health facilities, these building features are recommended but not required. These opportunities for improvement do not indicate that buildings are currently unsafe or out of compliance with building codes but rather point to areas where municipalities and operators can work together to enhance resident protection.

Based on these results, AGE and EOPSS are launching a joint effort to strengthen fire safety compliance and municipal coordination. EOPSS will distribute survey results to all local fire departments—the Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) —who are responsible for enforcing the State Fire Code. These results will inform the local fire departments of the 189 ALRs that self-identified opportunities to enhance best practice fire safety features so that they can continue to work together to enhance safety. To further strengthen accountability, AGE will introduce a new Compliance Verification Form requiring ALRs to secure annual sign-off from their municipal fire department. These forms will be kept on file at each ALR and reviewed by AGE during initial certification and recertification visits, ensuring stronger coordination between municipalities and the state.

For the 36 ALRs that self-reported they may benefit from additional work on preparedness measures (e.g., completing fire drills, updating mutual aid plans, or strengthening emergency coordination policies), AGE will request submission of a Corrective Action Plan within 45 days. These ALRs will also receive a targeted review of their training logs, drill performance, and emergency preparedness protocols during compliance reviews to ensure corrective measures are in place and staff are adequately prepared.

“Resident safety is our top priority, and the 100 percent response rate reflects the seriousness with which the assisted living operators are approaching this issue,” said **Aging & Independence Secretary Robin Lipson**. “By combining heightened awareness by the ALRs with stronger oversight, corrective actions, and clearer communication with municipalities, we are ensuring that risks are identified and addressed quickly.”

“Local fire departments and building officials are on the front lines of ensuring compliance with Massachusetts’ life safety codes,” said **Interim Public Safety and Security Secretary Susan W. Terrey**. “This coordinated approach makes sure municipalities have the information they need, and that older residences with reported concerns receive timely and thorough follow-up.”

“The safety of seniors who reside in assisted living residences is the top priority for all state and local public officials in the Commonwealth,” said **Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport), Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means**. “The tragic fire at the Gabriel House in my district in Fall River was a stark reminder of how we need to update and reequip these facilities that house vulnerable populations. I welcome these survey results and the data obtained, that will strengthen fire and safety protocols, enforce building code compliance, and employ best practices; all measures that will help save lives. I’m thankful to the Healey-Driscoll Administration and the Secretaries at the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and Aging and Independence for responding swiftly to ensure that municipalities have the resources they need to keep our assisted living residences operating at the highest safety level.”

“Fall River was devastated by the tragic Gabriel House fire that claimed 10 lives, displaced dozens and put our public safety professionals at risk,” said **Representative Carole Fiola (D-Fall River)**. “I thank Governor Healey for her attention and action to ensure ALR’s are in compliance with improved local and state regulations so that tragedies like these never occur again. We in the legislature are continuing to ensure this remains a top priority.”
“I thank Governor Healey for the transparency and partnership with municipalities to protect our most vulnerable populations,” said **Representative Alan Silvia (D-Fall River)**.

“I appreciate the Governor’s swift action in addressing this issue that affects both the private and public sector,” said **Representative Steven Ouellette (D-Westport)**.
“Anything that can be done to save lives and better protect our public safety personnel is

welcome with open arms as we try to move forward from this horrible tragedy." This joint effort builds on the Fire and Life Safety Initiative announced by Governor Healey in July and strengthens alignment across state and local partners to reduce inspection gaps and protect older adults across the state.

Statements of Support

Brian Doherty, President and CEO, Massachusetts Assisted Living Association:

"Resident safety and wellness are paramount priorities in assisted living. Assisted living providers are grateful for Governor Healey's swift response to the tragic fire at Gabriel House in Fall River. We have worked together with Secretary Lipson and AGE to share information and conduct the direct outreach that achieved 100% compliance with the Fire and Life Safety Initiative. ALRs play a vital role in the continuum of care, providing older adults with supportive, residential environments that prioritize dignity, independence, and quality of life while ensuring the protections they deserve."

Elissa Sherman, President, LeadingAge Massachusetts:

"LeadingAge Massachusetts commends the Healey Administration's continued leadership and collaborative efforts regarding resident safety and emergency preparedness in assisted living residences. The state's Fire and Life Safety Self-Assessment survey confirmed what we know to be true – that the vast majority of Assisted Living Residences maintain rigorous, well-established preparedness measures to protect residents and staff.

"As mission driven nonprofits, our members are deeply committed to the safety and well-being of older adults. They work closely with their local fire departments and public safety officials to ensure ongoing readiness and continuous improvement in emergency preparedness protocols. We look forward to working with the Executive Office of Aging & Independence to build upon these critical local relationships in efforts to support our shared goal of ensuring safety for all."

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If you have any questions, please contact us at Mass-ALA@mass-ala.org. This update is solely for general informational purposes. It is not intended to replace a full review of the cited regulations or guidance.

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