

Council keeps circuit breakers

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Electronic circuit breakers meant to prevent fires will be required throughout new homes.

The [Building Code Council](#), the state agency which sets minimum building standards, halted Tuesday a proposal to drop the requirement for the devices, known as arc fault circuit interrupters.

The switches sense minor fluctuations in current that could be a symptom of a dangerous and unseen exposed wire. The [switches](#) are more expensive than standard circuit breakers and homebuilders have opposed them, saying the added expense isn't worth what they saw as a marginal benefit.

The devices were previously required for bedrooms. They were then required in all living areas and the council was considering a move to roll back that change. On Friday, Gov. [Beverly Perdue](#) wrote a letter to the council chairman, expressing [her support](#) for the devices.

Perdue appoints all members of the council and her letter may have been the reason the council unanimously voted Tuesday to keep the devices in the code.

"You pick your battles," said Mack Nixon, an Albemarle homebuilder and member of the council who opposes expanded use of the devices.

Kim Reitterer, a Charlotte electrical engineer and council member, said the governor's letter likely reversed the council's intention to roll back use of the breakers.

"I think the governor's letter let people know how important fire safety is to North Carolina citizens," Reitterer said.