

# SANTA ROSA FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

July 1, 2010



## INFORMATION ABOUT RESIDENTIAL FIRE SPRINKLER IMPLEMENTATION

### PURPOSE

In January 2008, The City of Santa Rosa adopted by reference the 2007 California Fire Code. A local amendment was added requiring new building applications for one and two family residences to provide residential fire sprinklers. Santa Rosa was one of the few remaining jurisdictions in Sonoma County without a local residential fire sprinkler requirement. Staff worked closely with the Northern California Home Builders Association (HBA) during the months prior to the amendment adoption. Prior to the economic slowdown, staff met quarterly with the HBA Executive Board to update and work closely on issues affecting HBA members.

In July 2008, HBA members approached the City to request some relief from sprinklers for residential projects with previous plan approvals. After meetings with the Mayor and City Manager, staff agreed to take a proposal to the City Council. The proposal exempted projects that had received improvement plan approvals prior to June 30, 2007, road base was constructed and approved and where the lot had a ¾ inch water lateral installed. In exchange, model homes would be provided sprinklers and they would be offered as an option for new homes. Council approved the proposal allowing the Community Development Director and Fire Chief to make the exemption decision.

Recently the State of California adopted the 2010 California Residential Code (CRC). The CRC set a minimum state standard for the installation of residential fire sprinklers for all new one and two family dwellings in California. The new code becomes effective for all new building permit applications received after January 1, 2011. City staff requested a legal opinion on our ability to continue to provide exemptions under the previously adopted conditions for projects. The opinion provided, identified the City's lack of authority to exempt new homes from the residential sprinkler requirement as the State now had set a minimum state standard.

Staff notified leaders of the Construction Coalition in September 2010. New applications received prior to January 1, 2011 would remain under the previous agreement. Some of the previously approved projects have ¾ inch water service laterals. In most cases, these laterals are sufficient to provide the required flow and pressure for a residential fire sprinkler system. Lots where there are significant elevation differences, homes set back off the street more than 30 feet and three story homes may experience difficulty meeting the demands with a ¾ inch lateral. The available options are to increase the lateral size for lots fronting private drives, provide a pressure tank system, or possibly install a domestic shutoff valve. Tanks are used extensively in the County areas. The domestic shutoff device shuts domestic water uses during an sprinkler system activation to reduce the system demand.

Staff's experience to date has been that there are a few lots that cannot meet the sprinkler demand. The Linwood Subdivision, as an example, is currently being developed by Lennar Homes. The project has 211 lots/units. A recent evaluation of their lots identified 9 lots that may require a pressure tank, upgraded water lateral or a domestic shutoff valve. However, if the building permit applications for those lots are received prior to January 1, 2011, they would be exempt from residential fire sprinklers requirements established by the 2010 California Building Code.

We appreciate your concern and would be happy to have staff meet to answer any questions regarding the residential sprinkler requirements for projects within the City of Santa Rosa.