



# **Building Code Update Project: Highlights**

## **PWPT Committee Presentation**

**Planning, Building & Development  
May 26, 2021**

# Summary of Amendments

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**The Planning & Development Department has been working on a project to update the current building codes from the currently adopted 2012 series of International Code Council (ICC) publications, to the 2018 series: Commercial, Residential, Mechanical, Fuel Gas, Swimming Pool & Spa, Fire. The update would also include the 2017 National Electrical Code.**

**Each code will have administrative amendments.**

**Residential fire suppression-related amendments are of particular interest. Early Committee feedback is sought.**

# Residential Fire Suppression

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**The 2018 International Residential Code (IRC) currently requires new residential dwellings to be protected by an automatic residential fire sprinkler system.**

**The County Board has maintained a long-standing policy of removing requirement for automatic fire sprinklers in new one and two family dwellings (such requirements were amended out of our codes in the current and all previous updates)**

**If the Board continues this policy, staff proposes to mitigate the impact of removing the fire sprinkler provision via more restrictive garage/dwelling separation and means of egress provisions.**

**Based on 2020 data from the National Fire Protection Association, (NFPA), reported 1 & 2 family dwelling structure fires have decreased.**

# Residential Fire Sprinkler Cost Analysis

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**Contractors report that they are paying as much as \$3.50 per square foot of covered area for fire sprinkler installation. Builders may absorb part of those costs, while a significant portion of such costs would be passed on to the customer, reducing housing affordability.**

**Depending on the fire protection district, alarm monitoring can average \$24.00 per month for the new homeowner.**

**System design/installation requires additional building permit review and inspection fees.**

**The County would incur costs to train all necessary staff to review and inspect sprinkler systems.**

# Impact on Insurance Costs

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**Fire sprinklers may not significantly decrease insurance costs:**

- **Many major insurance companies offer discounts ranging from 2%-10% on the structure coverage only.**
- **Many unrelated factors can affect insurance costs.**
- **Homeowners could face possible costs for code upgrade insurance.**

# Fire Sprinkler Cost Breakdowns

|                |                                       | Low End Cost  |   | High End Cost   |   |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Square footage | New construction with a full basement | Cost based on \$2.50 per square foot with adequate public water service available | Cost Based on \$2.50 per square foot for properties served by private wells | Cost based on \$3.50 per square foot with adequate public water service available | Cost Based on \$3.50 per square foot for properties served by private wells |
| 1,500          | Ranch                                 | \$7,500   | \$11,500  | \$10,500  | \$14,500  |
| 1,500          | Two Story                             | \$11,250  | \$15,250  | \$15,750  | \$19,750  |
| 2,500          | Ranch                                 | \$12,500  | \$16,500  | \$17,500  | \$21,500  |
| 2,500          | Two Story                             | \$18,750  | \$22,750  | \$26,250  | \$30,250  |
| 3,000          | Ranch                                 | \$15,000  | \$19,000  | \$21,000  | \$25,000  |
| 3,000          | Two Story                             | \$22,500  | \$26,500  | \$31,500  | \$35,500  |

# Policy Considerations

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**Residential fire sprinklers make homes safer in the event of a fire incident.**

**Independent of fire sprinklers, construction has become significantly safer over time due to materials and methods. Staff's proposed mitigation standards (more restrictive garage/dwelling separation and means of egress provisions) would offset the increased safety features of residential fire sprinklers.**

**Given their independent authority, multiple fire protection districts overlapping unincorporated areas currently require such systems. PB&D supports and coordinates with fire protection districts that independently require these systems in unincorporated areas.**

**Overall, construction costs are increasing due to rising material costs, affecting affordability. Residential fire sprinkler costs would increase that cost burden.**

# Proposed Next Steps

Revise  
amendments  
based on  
committee  
feedback  
Early June

Convene focus  
group  
Mid-June

Present final  
recommendation  
to committee  
June 30

Present final  
draft to full  
board for  
approval.  
July 13





**Questions?**