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Changes in Florida Building Code 553.73

The dust is still settling from a very disappointing 2010 Florida Legislative Session. Elections and campaigns definitely took a front seat to fire and life safety. Here are some of the changes to the Florida Building Code:

There still is a local option in Florida but the local government must identify economic benefits.

The language that passed is:

553.73 Florida Building Code.—

(14) The provisions of section R313 of the most current version of the International Residential Code relating to mandated fire sprinklers may not be incorporated into the Florida Building Code as adopted by the Florida Building Commission and may not be adopted as a local amendment to the Florida Building Code. This subsection does not apply to a local government that has a lawfully adopted ordinance relating to fire sprinklers which has been in effect since January 1, 2010.

A local government can adopt local amendments to the Florida Building Code. There is no action needed other than a local ordinance and the appropriate hearing notice. So the language above says that local government cannot simply adopt R313 of the IRC - they have to go through a series of steps.

However, there are other provisions in law that were discussed during Legislative hearings and testimony from the Florida homebuilders and proponents of the bad language indicate that the intent was to allow the following language found in s. 633.025 to continue. In fact there was bad language amended to this economic language that would have the force and effect of repealing this language that we were able to amend out of the bill - still prohibits sprinklers in homes used as public lodging.

9) The provisions of the Life Safety Code shall not apply to newly constructed one-family and two-family dwellings. However, fire sprinkler protection may be permitted by local government in (lieu of other fire

(Continued on Page 2)

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protection-related development requirements for such structures). While local governments may adopt fire sprinkler requirements for one- and two- family dwellings under this subsection, it is the intent of the Legislature that the economic consequences of the fire sprinkler mandate on home owners be studied before the enactment of such a requirement. After the effective date of this act, any local government that desires to adopt a fire sprinkler requirement on one- or two-family dwellings must prepare an economic cost and benefit report that analyzes the application of fire



sprinklers to one- or two-family dwellings or any proposed residential subdivision. The report must consider the tradeoffs and specific cost savings and benefits of fire sprinklers for future owners of property. The report must include an assessment of the cost savings from any reduced or eliminated impact fees if applicable, the reduction in special fire district tax, insurance fees, and other taxes or fees imposed, and the waiver of certain infrastructure requirements including the reduction of roadway widths, the reduction of water line sizes, increased fire hydrant spacing, increased dead-end roadway length and a reduction in cul-de-sac sizes relative to the costs from fire sprinkling. A failure to prepare an economic report shall result in the

invalidation of the fire sprinkler requirement to any one- or two-family dwelling or any proposed subdivision. In addition, a local jurisdiction or utility may not charge any additional fee, above what is charged to a non-fire sprinklered dwelling, on the basis that a one- or two-family dwelling unit is protected by a fire sprinkler system.

(10) Before imposing a fire sprinkler requirement on any one- or two-family dwelling, a local government must provide the owner of any one- or two-family dwelling a letter documenting specific infrastructure or other tax or fee allowances and waivers that are listed in but not limited to those described in subsection (9) for the dwelling. The documentation must show that the cost savings reasonably approximate the cost of the purchase and installation of a fire protection system.

A number of communities indicate that they still intend to pursue fire sprinkler ordinances and the Association is currently working on developing tools to help local officials accurately and efficiently work through the requirement to provide an economic impact report.

August Area Interest Meetings and Train-the-Trainer Courses

Building on the success of a number of highly attended side-by-side burn demonstrations in South Florida, we have developed a program for sprinkler contractors and fire educators in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of fire sprinklers.

The purpose of this "Train-the-Trainer" program is to show step by step the life saving capabilities of home fire sprinkler systems by comparing two rooms, one protected and one non-

REGIONAL REPORT

Florida Edition



protected, in order to educate and build consumer demand for home fire sprinklers in various communities. We have developed a 1.5 hour train the trainer program that for sprinkler contractors and fire educators to give them the proper tools to construct and conduct a side by side burn.

By providing an educational and informative program the public should understand the following:

- 1) How combustible materials can cause a fire, serious injury and even death,
- 2) How a fire sprinkler system can limit and control fire hazards and
- 3) Provide a general understanding of the technology of a fire sprinkler system and how it works.

As a result of the training program the educator will also be able to explain what a flashover is and why it is dangerous and teach awareness of the response time of a fire department and various other fact based information. The educator will also learn disassemble instructions and how to return site to normal operating conditions. Participants will be given tools, including information on a potential stipend from the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition to conduct the demonstrations.



The Train-the-Trainers will be given in conjunction with August Area Interest Meetings. 1.5 CEU's of continuing education credit will be given to fire officials and contractors who attend the class and finally, there is no charge for the train-the-trainer. As always, please check the website at: www.FloridaFireSprinkler.com for the latest information. Tentative dates and locations for August are:

- August 10- Panhandle
- August 11- Tallahassee
- August 12- Tampa
- August 17- Jacksonville
- August 18- Orlando
- August 24- Ft. Myers
- August 25- Palm Beach County
- August 26- Miami

We will look forward to seeing you at one of these classes.

FFSA Education Committee-Top Myers Presentations

Top Myers of the FFSA Education Committee attended most of the June Area Interest Meetings and reported on the development of methods to clarify elements of Florida's ITM issues regarding **69A-46.041 Inspection Requirements for Fire Protection Systems**, including issues related to tagging water based fire suppression systems. Several issues identified early in the process included the need to clarify definitions in NFPA 25 and consequently develop a program to educate AHJ's, as well as provide information that needs refined in 69A-46.041. Watch for updates at future Area Interest Meetings.

FFSA Members Attend NICET Test Alternative Stakeholders Meeting

Several members and staff of the Florida Fire Sprinkler Association attended a stakeholders meeting to provide input and suggestions into the process that is being developed to provide alternative testing for Inspector requirements, now being developed as the result of a change in the law from the 2010 Session.

The meeting was hosted at the Palm Beach Fire and Rescue Center and included industry professionals to help make suggestions to aid in the development of the testing alternative. The Fire Sprinkler Academy, in Champaign, Illinois is the 3rd. party testing agency developing the process. Their goal is to develop high-quality inspectors for Florida and their belief is that to successfully develop the process, the input of industry stakeholders was necessary.

It was stressed that the integrity of the exam process is the Academy's alone and the exams will not be developed or run by an industry committee or created by anyone that could compromise or create a conflict of interest with The Academy. More information about the testing process will be given as it develops.

Sprinkler Save Information

We need your sprinkler save information. Getting that information out to those who seek it is one of the most beneficial ways we can communicate the fire sprinkler message. Every day fire sprinklers are saving lives and preventing property damage. We need to pass that information on.

Please send us your "sprinkler save" information either by emailing or by directly submitting on the "Sprinkler Save" page of the Florida Web Site at: www.floridafiresprinkler.com