


FROM	NAME & TITLE	David E. Scott, P.E., Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL 10-0437		

DATE: May 4, 2010

TO

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Karen Randle
Room 400 - City Hall

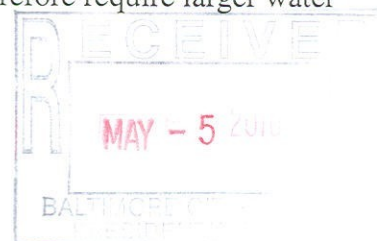
I am herein reporting on City Council Bill 10-0437 introduced by Council Members Clarke, Branch, Young, Henry, Middleton, Conaway, and Spector.

The purpose of the Bill is to require automatic fire sprinkler systems in certain newly constructed or substantially rehabbed townhouses and other dwellings; provide certain exceptions; repeal superceded provisions; and generally related to sprinkler systems in residences.

The City of Baltimore revises its Code from time to time to coincide with certain changes in the Building, Fire, and Related Codes. In doing so, certain international and national standards are adopted, with additions, deletions, or clarifications added which better apply to the conditions and circumstances in Baltimore. Currently, the Baltimore City Code adopted certain portions of the International Residential Code, including Appendix P {Sprinkling}. City Council Bill 10-0437, if approved, would delete Appendix P and replace it with a new Section 313A {Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems}. This new section of the Building Planning Code would require an approved automatic residential fire sprinkler system to be installed in any new or renovated townhouse or 1- or 2-family dwelling. These systems would have to be designed and installed according to § 903.3 of the Building Code. These systems would not be required in an existing residence where the rehabilitation work adds less than 30% to the gross floor area of the residence as defined in § 1-304 of the Zoning Code, or if the work alters less than 30% of the gross floor area. Finally, the Department of Public Works would have to require minimum service sizes for water lines and meters for buildings with sprinklers.

Residential properties of the size addressed in this legislation are typically served with small sized water meters. In general, meter size affects the minimum water and sewer charges a customer receives and these meters would be at the low range of minimum charges. Accommodating a fire sprinkler system requires that a water service be capable of delivering large volumes of water at sufficient pressure to ensure complete distribution of water throughout the building. These volume and pressure requirements are beyond what is typically needed for operating household water fixtures and therefore require larger water meters. Larger water meters carry larger minimum charges.


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For large buildings, fire sprinkler systems have their service separate from the metered water service and owners are charged an annual inspection fee for the fire service. For the residential buildings covered in this legislation, all water and water sprinkler needs would be serviced from one water service and water meter, thus requiring a larger water meter to meet the demands of a sprinkler system. In 1995 the Department of Public Works established an adjusted sewer rate charge for a homeowner with a larger than normal water meter supplying a sprinkler system. In 2007 an adjusted water rate was established to permit the Revenue Measurement and Billing Division to bill a homeowner having a larger water meter that is supplying a sprinkler system, to be charged at the normal meter rate of a consumer without a sprinkler system. These accommodations are reflected in the water and sewer rates provided to the Board of Estimates for approval each year.

The Department of Public Works has no objection to the passage of City Council Bill 10-0437 as certain minimum service sizes for water lines and meters to buildings having sprinkler systems are already in place. Placing these minimum service sizes in the Department's regulations would be an easy accommodation. In addition, the Department already provides for adjustments in water and sewer charges in its rate structure so as to not penalize residential properties having sprinkler systems which require larger meters. It should be noted, however, that this legislation will have some unknown financial impact on rehabilitation costs for some residential property owners. A residential structure that is planned for increased or altered gross floor area of 30% or more will require installation of sprinkler systems throughout the entire structure. This requirement will necessitate the opening up of walls and installing the necessary plumbing and fixtures in areas not planned to be disturbed by the renovations.



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