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Agency Name & Address	Baltimore City Fire Department 401 E. Fayette Street, Mezzanine
Subject	City Council Bill #24-0502 Building, Fire, and Related Codes – 2021 Edition

CITY OF
BALTIMORE
MEMO



TO: The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 408

DATE: April 15, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

INTRODUCTION

The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD or Department) has reviewed City Council Bill 24-0502 Building, Fire, and Related Codes - 2021 Edition for the purpose of adopting a revised Building, Fire, and Related Codes Article, and generally relating to the adoption of new building, fire, property maintenance, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and related codes for Baltimore City. If approved by the City Council, this ordinance would allow Baltimore City to adopt its own revised version of the 2021 International Code Council (ICC) family of Codes in accordance with State law.

ANALYSIS

Every three years, Baltimore City is required to update its Building Fire and Related Codes pursuant to the directive of the General Assembly by and through the Department of Labor (DLR). DLR adopted the State's Maryland Building Performance Standards which incorporates the 2021 International Code Council (ICC) family of Codes with State amendments; which went into effect on May 29, 2023. Local jurisdictions have one year from the effective date of the Maryland Building Performance Standards to adopt their own version of the ICC in conformance with State law, after which time the State codes are automatically adopted.

BCFD has reviewed sections of the International Fire Code and the majority of the updates are small corrections such as reference alignments, clarifying language, technical changes or updates intended to improve the application of the code and customer experience during the permitting process, including improved quality of plans submittal reduced review time, and fire safety. A few notable changes are highlighted below:

Pages 225 - 227, Sections 104.8.2.1 – 104.8.2.4

There is an existing provision within the 2021 International Fire Code that allows the Fire Code Official to authorize technical opinions and reports for complex and/or large projects. Additionally, the Fire Code Official is authorized to require design submittals to be prepared by and bear the stamp of a registered design professional.

The proposed amendment clarifies this existing provision, which includes the following:

- Identifies the type of projects which will require a technical report. The technical report will be referred to as a "Fire and Life Safety Design Evaluation (FLSDE)".
- Identifies the qualification for a FLSDE preparer.
- Identifies the items covered within the FLSDE report.

Requiring a FLDSE will reduce the time required to research, review and approve plans and construction documents for technically complex and/or large projects. The FLSDE preparer will be responsible for identifying and correcting code deficiencies prior to the submittal of construction documents to the City for final approval. His/her evaluation and corrective actions should be listed in the FLSDE. The net result will be decreased plan review/permitting time and improved customer service.

Page 241, Section 901.2.2

An existing provision within the 2021 International Fire Code allows the Fire Code Official to require construction documents and calculations for all fire protection and life safety systems. Construction documents for fire protection and life safety system shall be submitted for review and approval prior to the system installation.

The proposed amendment provides additional clarification to the minimum requirement for construction documents.

Uniformly prepared construction documents submitted by a design professional will decrease the number of revisions required to obtain approval; resulting in decreased plan review/permitting time and improved customer service.

Page 242, Section 903.2.8.4

The proposed amendment clarifies the existing requirement within the IFC, Section 202, requiring care facilities (Use Group R-3) to have an automatic sprinkler system when located within a single-family dwelling. Based on the provision of the IFC, Section 104.9, the Fire Code Official shall have the authority to grant a modification for individual cases and special individual reasons that make the strict letter of this code impractical. However, an alternative level of fire protection and life safety shall be provided.

In the opinion of the Fire Code Official, Care Facilities that are no more than 2 stories above grade, that are equipped with a monitored fire detection system (i.e. smoke detectors monitor by a UL listed central station) and self-closing, 30-minute fire-rated doors protecting all sleeping area, and an approved emergency rescue opening for all

sleeping areas is an acceptable alternative. It should be noted that an approved code modification request shall be submitted and approved through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Please refer to the Exception.

The exception has a significantly lower financial impact to the small care facilities attempting to obtain a Use and Occupancy Permit in the City. Conversely, the monitored fire detection system will quickly alert the occupants of a fire event and notify the Fire Department simultaneously via the monitoring company.

Page 243, Section 904.3.4

The proposed amendment provides notification of fire suppression activation to occupants located above a commercial cooking operation (i.e. restaurant, carryout, catering, etc.). This amendment clarifies existing requirements located in NFPA 17A (Wet Chemical Extinguishing Systems) and NFPA 96 (Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations), which have been adopted by reference in the 2021 IFC, Chapter 80. The aforementioned standards require occupant notification (audible and visual) when the system has activated.

Page 243, Section 907.1.2

The proposed amendment establishes the minimum requirements for the preparer of Fire Alarm Shop Drawings. Uniformly prepared construction documents submitted by a certified design professional will decrease the number of revisions required to obtain approval; resulting in decreased plan review / permitting time and improved customer service.

Page 244, Section 907.2

Manual Fire Alarm Boxes (Pull Stations) are a critical component for activating a building's fire alarm system and notifying that building occupants of a fire event. The proposed amendment rejects the exceptions within the IFC, which allows Manual Fire Alarm Boxes to be eliminated in numerous circumstances.

Specifically, rejecting the exceptions ensures that Manual Fire Alarm Boxes will be installed at all exit doorways. The benefit is that it will increase the probability that the Fire Alarm System will be quickly activated by occupants leaving the building if they are aware of a fire; and not be dependent on initiation by a heat detector, smoke detector or a sprinkler head.

Conclusion

BCFD respectfully requests a favorable report on the passage of City Council Bill 24-0502.

JW/kw