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CalFire ADU Memorandum



California State Fire Marshal Information Bulletin 17-001

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Automatic Residential Fire Sprinkler System Requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units

Senate Bill 1069, Wieckowski (Chapter 720, Statutes of 2016) Land use: zoning, amends section 65852 of the Government Code to provide reform and incentives to facilitate and expedite the construction of affordable housing. The law was created to allow the construction of additional dwelling units associated with existing housing. An accessory dwelling unit may be attached or unattached to the existing house. The changes in the statute affect the automatic residential fire sprinkler system requirements for accessory dwelling units by exempting the requirement in some situations, noted below.

The Government Code is part of California statute and the bill has an effective date of January 1, 2017. The statute takes precedence over local regulations or ordinances. The information on SB 1069 can be found at:
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB1069

Automatic Residential Fire Sprinkler System Requirements

The California Residential Code section R313.2 requires automatic residential fire sprinkler systems in one and two family dwellings:

R313.2 One- and two-family dwellings automatic fire systems. An automatic residential fire sprinkler system shall be installed in one- and two-family dwellings.

Exception: An automatic residential fire sprinkler system shall not be required for *additions* or *alterations* to existing buildings that are not already provided with an automatic residential sprinkler system.

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Senate Bill 1069 adds the following exception for automatic residential fire sprinkler systems if all the following conditions exist:

- The unit meets the definition of an Accessory Dwelling Unit in the Government Code (section 65852.2).
- The existing primary residence is not required to have an automatic residential sprinkler system.
- The accessory detached dwelling unit does not exceed 1,200 square feet in size.
- The unit is on the same lot as the primary residence.

The statute prohibits local authorities from requiring automatic residential sprinkler systems for accessory dwelling units unless they are required for the primary dwelling unit.

The following information is provided for clarification:

- Automatic residential sprinkler systems are required in all new homes including those built with an accessory dwelling unit.
- New accessory dwelling units must have an automatic residential sprinkler system when the existing house has an automatic residential sprinkler system.
- Existing houses without an automatic residential sprinkler system adding an accessory dwelling unit are not required to provide an automatic residential sprinkler system.

Addition considerations:

- Existing houses that increase the square footage while adding an attached accessory dwelling unit may exceed an automatic residential sprinkler system threshold ordinance based on a local ordinance. If the local authority has an ordinance that applies to all houses and requires fire sprinklers when the square footage exceeds the prescribed amount, the local authority may then require an automatic residential sprinkler system to the entire house including the accessory dwelling unit.
- New detached accessory dwelling units are required to comply with the standards for fire protection such as water supply and fire department access. Automatic residential sprinkler systems provide construction options for the owner by providing different ways to complying with the fire protection requirements.