



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 3, 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to Amend and Reordain Article B (Fire Prevention), Chapter 2 (Fire Protection and Prevention), Title 4 (Public Safety) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as Amended.

ISSUE: Updating the Fire Prevention Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in order to make it cohesive with the Commonwealth's changes to the 2012 Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council introduce the ordinance amending and updating the Fire Prevention Code of the City of Alexandria on first reading and set it for public hearing, second reading and final passage for June 13, 2015, with an effective date of June 13, 2015.

BACKGROUND: The Commonwealth's release of the 2012 Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code this past year necessitates corresponding changes to the Fire Prevention Code of the City of Alexandria. The City's last comprehensive review of the Fire Prevention Code of the City of Alexandria occurred in 2011.

For the most part, the changes contained in the attached ordinance reflect only the need to correct grammatical errors and to renumber large portions of the City's Code to make them cohesive with the new numbering scheme established by the Commonwealth's Code. There are, however, some substantive changes that are worth noting and that will be highlighted below and in the accompanying reference table.

DISCUSSION: The proposed substantive changes are as follows:

1. In Section 4-2-17(d) of the City Code, a change has been made to make it unlawful for any person to reset any “fire alarm system, fire detection system, fire suppression system, [or] fire extinguishing system” without prior authorization. This expands the previous provision which was limited to the resetting of any “fire protection system.”
2. Section 4-2-18 has been expanded to identify four classes of individuals who are authorized to use fire hydrants without violating the law. The previous provision was less specific.
3. In Section 103.4, Appendices H, I, and J of the 2012 International Fire Code have been deleted. Appendix H was deleted because the process and format for the documents are covered elsewhere in the City Code. Appendix I was deleted because its terms and protections are covered elsewhere in the City Code. Appendix J was deleted because its sign requirements are overly complex, not practical, and because other sections of the Code cover their terms adequately.
4. Appendices A, B, C, and D were deleted from their current location in the Fire Prevention Code of the City of Alexandria, and were moved to the rear of the document. This was done to mirror the Commonwealth’s structure. Small changes were made to the contents of the Appendices. The most noteworthy of these changes being an updated reference to fire flow standards in Appendix B, and the inclusion of curb diagrams in Appendix D.
5. The previous “Operation Permit Requirements” Table was deleted in its entirety and replaced with the “Operational Permit Requirements” Table. The Code Sections column was updated extensively to match the new numbering system established by the 2012 Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code. Additionally, now, like the 2012 Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, there is a column included which identifies the associated permit fee. Finally, some new categories of activities that require permits were added to the Table.
6. Section 107.15 was added to clarify that permit fees are non-refundable once an inspection is completed.
7. In Section 202, a definition for a “special assembly” was added to the pre-existing list of definitions. Permits are required for special assemblies under the Operational Permit Table.
8. Section 321, entitled “Portable Food Vending Vehicles” was added to the Fire Prevention Code of the City of Alexandria. The addition of this section codifies pre-existing practices of regulating the safety of food vending vehicles that contain commercial cooking operations. It requires such vehicles to comply with various sections of the 2012 Virginia Fire Prevention Code, including Section 609 (Commercial Cooking Hoods), 904.11 - 904.11.6 (Commercial Cooking Systems), and Chapters 50, 57, 58, and 61 (relating to Hazardous materials). A requirement for permits has been added. These permits will be coordinated with the City Health Department.
9. Sections 403.11.2.1 - 403.11.2.4.1 were added to increase public safety during gatherings. The new sections require the submission of a safety plan 30 days prior to the event’s start date. They also require that event organizers / coordinators supply valid emergency contact information during the event.
10. Section 503.6.1 entitled “Security Gate Override” requires the installation of override functions on all new security gates that restrict automatic operation from the fire department.
11. Section 506.1 entitled “Key Box” has been extensively edited. While key repositories are still required, as they were under the old City Code, this new provision spells out in detail (1) what type of box shall be used, (2) where that box shall be located, and (3) what types of keys (along with the proper color-scheme) shall be provided within the box.
12. Section 511 is a new Section that requires owners of commercial buildings to provide the City of Alexandria with contact information for after-hours emergency contact.
13. Section 805.4 extends the requirements of 805.4.1 - 805.4.2.3 to assembly areas classified in Group R-2.
14. Sections 901.7.3.1 and 901.7.3.2 were added to require and describe in detail the placement of tags on any fire system that has been removed from service.
15. Section 912.4.1 requires the installation of signage for fire department connections. The signs must be

located in a certain fashion and must be of a certain size. This requirement has been coordinated with the Planning and Zoning's urban planners.

16. Section 1004.3.1 was added to clarify that the owner, occupant, or lessee of a building is obligated to maintain occupancy placards.
17. A revised (cleaner) Figure 1022.9.1, depicting stairway sign requirements, was added to the City Code.
18. A revised (cleaner) Figure 1022.9.2, depicting an example of a required Building Footprint Sign, was added to the Code.
19. Section 1030.3.1 was added to give the fire official additional authority to regulate overcrowding which might limit the means of egress from a building.

See Attachment 1 (reference table) for a summary of all of the proposed changes.

FISCAL IMPACT: There will not be a fiscal impact associated with the proposed ordinances as fee rates are not proposed to change, and this ordinance will not require additional staffing to administer.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Reference Guide
Attachment 2 - Ordinance
Attachment 3 - Docket Cover Sheet

STAFF:

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