



Builder Bulletin

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Affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and the PA Builders Association (PBA)

News for BAMP Members

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Governor Signs Act 1 of 2011

Decision to install fire sprinklers returned to consumers

It wasn't easy but BAMP members, co-workers and our customers worked tirelessly with the members of the Pa Builders Association and its coalition partners, including members of the Pennsylvania Realtors Association, to support passage of legislation removing the fire sprinkler mandate in one- and two-family new home construction. Working with key legislative leaders like House Majority Leader Representative Mike Turzai of Allegheny County and others, we received overwhelming support from both republicans and democrats in both the house and senate. The bill was signed into law by Governor Tom Corbett on April 25th as Act 1 of 2011, the first law signed by our new Governor!

The legislation allows consumers to waive the sprinkler requirement and makes further changes to Pennsylvania's Uniform Construction Act, including the removal of the wall bracing requirements in the 2009 code the process in how future building codes are adopted in Pennsylvania.

Contrary to some belief, we are still building to the 2009 IRC standards, only certain requirements, like sprinklers and wall bracing, have been removed. The requirement to build to the 2009 energy standards and installation of fire sprinklers in townhomes of 3 units or more are still required in Pennsylvania. **Specifically Act 1 of 2011:**

- Removes the sprinkler mandate from one and two family homes by waiver of the consumer.
- Requires builders to offer sprinkler systems to buyers at the point of sale.
- Requires the builders to provide information, supplied by the State Fire Commissioner, on the possible benefits of installing a sprinkler system.
- Requires increased fire protection for lightweight floor assemblies
- Allows homes already permitted after January 1, 2011 to retroactively waive the sprinkler requirement
- Ends automatic adoption in Pennsylvania of future editions of the International Residential Code, IRC, unless approved by Pennsylvania's Code Review and Advisory Council

IMPORTANT SPINKLER WAIVER INFORMATION

A builder whose customer wants to waive the installation of fire sprinklers in one- and two-family homes must provide information from the Pa State Fire Commissioner. Builders must direct their customers to visit the state fire commissioner's website located at www.osfc.state.pa.us.

Builders must also provide their customers with information that explains the initial cost of installation as well as the ongoing costs of maintaining the fire system. Include information relative to the manufacturer's recommendations concerning maintenance, standards of care and what is required related to warranties. Also be sure to include any government required inspections or system checks that they may require, including annual inspections of back-flow preventers if one is required.

The Pa Builders Association (PBA), has developed a model waiver form for exclusive use by members. A copy of this form may be obtained through BAMP's or PBA's Member's Only section of our websites.

Additional fire protection is required when using lightweight floor systems, manufactured floor trusses or I-joists, by applying a layer of 1/2" drywall, 5/8" wood structural panel, or equivalent to the underside of the floor framing member.

Exceptions to floor protection requirement are...

- Floor assemblies directly over a space protected by an automatic sprinkler system
- Floor assemblies over crawlspaces not containing fuel fired appliances;
- Floor systems constructed with 2 x 10 or 2 x 12 dimensional lumber, or structural composite lumber of equal or greater size;
- Floor systems demonstrating an equivalent fire performance approved by the code official.
- There is also an exception for an 80 sf area to install mechanical equipment, provided it is protected by fire blocking along the entire perimeter.
- The code does not require you to tape or finish the dry-wall.