



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

ADMINISTRATIVE RULINGS

Policies/Interpretations

12.9

Ventura County Fire Code, Appendix B Additions and Accessory Buildings in Water (Fire Flow) Impacted Areas.

APPROVED BY: _____


FIRE MARSHAL

Subject:

Ventura County Fire Code, Appendix B Fire Flow.
Additions and Accessory Buildings in Water (Fire Flow) Impacted Areas

Code Requirements:

Current Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC) requires fire flow for all new buildings and for additions exceeding 50% of existing floor area (one and two family dwellings). Additions to buildings that were previously exempted from fire flow must provide fire flow regardless of the percent of addition.

New small agricultural buildings complying with VCFC Appendix B are exempt from fire flow requirements.

New buildings and uses requiring a water demand, domestic and or fire flow, shall not be permitted if the new building or use will impact or decrease the fire flow water available for the existing buildings and uses within the water purveyor's service area or service zone.

All land subdivision applications require a water "Availability" letter before the application can be processed by RMA. All new buildings that have a water demand require a "Will-Serve" prior to obtaining a building permit. When water "Availability" or "Will-Serve" letter is required, it must be signed by the purveyor's engineer of record and must certify the water system is in compliance with the VCWWM.

The VCWWM and the County Building & Safety Division does not require a "Will-Serve" certification for residential additions. Residential additions would not affect the flow, storage and duration requirements of the water system under the VCWWM.

Current VCFC Appendix B does not require fire flow for small agricultural buildings not exceeding 400 square feet and other limitations.

Discussion:

Previous Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC) and policy did not require fire flow upgrades for up to 50% additions to One and Two Family Dwellings (R-3 Occupancy). Current VCFC has provision to limit additions where no fire flow is available for existing buildings. Recently, the Fire District has been made aware of water systems that do not meet the full requirements of the Ventura County Waterworks Manual (VCWWM) and the VCFC, especially regarding storage and duration of fire flows. Most systems do not have properly sized storage tanks and rely on ground water for duration. While the responsibility lies with the water purveyor to meet the requirements, most of the systems where this is an impact are older systems that were originally constructed prior to the adoption of the VCWWM and fire flow requirements and there has been no change to the existing system.

The Ventura County Public Works Agency (PWA), Ventura County Resource Management Agency (RMA) and the Fire District have been working on revisions to the VCWWM that will bring fire flow requirements in-line with current Fire Codes. Additionally, several water purveyors have started review of their systems to determine if the system is in compliance or is in need of upgrades. While this is occurring, the Fire District has been receiving requests for new residential buildings, additions and accessory buildings. This Administrative Ruling addresses both the needs of the community requesting to expand residential buildings and the provision for adequate fire flow for fire protection of the community. This ruling is based upon current VCFC, VCWWM and County Ordinances

Requirements:**Residential One and Two Family Dwellings (Group R-3):**

New buildings are not permitted until required fire flow is provided.

Additions up to 50% of the existing legally permitted floor area may be allowed. Fire sprinkler retro-fit is not required in accordance with VCFC.

Note: This allowance is not available if the building was previously exempt from fire flow due to size (under 700 sq ft) in accordance with VCFC. These buildings are treated as a new building under VCFC and are required full fire flow and fire sprinklers.

Accessory Buildings to 1 and 2 Family Dwellings (Group U):

New buildings and additions are allowed as follows.

Additions to Accessory Buildings:

- If it is an addition to an existing R-3 dwelling, then the 50% rule above shall apply.
- If it is an addition to an existing accessory building (Group U), then the addition shall not exceed 50% of the existing legally permitted floor area or 400 square feet, which ever is less.

- No new plumbing is permitted.
- The building shall be separated from other buildings by a minimum of 10 feet.
- Change of use is not permitted unless fire flow is provided.

New Accessory Buildings:

- New buildings are limited to a single Group U detached private garage or storage building not exceeding 400 sq ft of floor area upon any parcel. The buildings shall not be used as recreation rooms, pool buildings, hobby rooms, gyms, workshops or similar uses.
- There shall be no plumbing within the building.
- The building shall be separated from other buildings by a minimum of 10 feet.
- Change of use is not permitted unless fire flow is provided.

Commercial, Industrial and Multi-Family Buildings:

New buildings and additions are not permitted until required fire flow is provided. This is due to higher fire flows than residential One and Two Family Dwellings.