



## ADMINISTRATIVE RULING 20-801 CONSTRUCTION IN WATER IMPACT AREAS

APPROVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_



FIRE MARSHAL

### **Subject:**

2019 Ventura County Fire Code, Appendix B Fire-Flow.

Construction in designated water (fire-flow) impacted areas located within the unincorporated areas of the County.

### **Code Requirements:**

Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC) requires fire-flow for all new buildings. Additions to existing buildings may require additional fire-flow when the square footage being added results in the total square footage of the building being at a higher level in the fire-flow tables located within Appendix B.

Exemptions to and reductions in the required fire-flow are allowed for specific types of uses and are outlined within Appendix B.

All land subdivision applications require a Water Availability Letter (WAL) before the application can be processed by the Ventura County Resource Management Agency (RMA). All new buildings that have a water demand require a Will-Serve letter prior to obtaining a building permit. When either of these items are required, they must be signed by the water purveyor's engineer of record and must certify the water system is in compliance with the Ventura County Waterworks Manual (VCWWM).

### **Discussion:**

Previous editions of the VCFC and policy did not require fire-flow upgrades for additions up to 50% to one and two-family dwellings (Group R-3 occupancies). The current edition of the VCFC has provisions to limit additions where no fire-flow is available for existing buildings. Over the past several years, it has become known that some existing water systems cannot supply the required fire-flow and therefore not in compliance with the requirements of the VCWWM and the VCFC. While the responsibility lies with the water purveyor to meet the requirements, some of the systems in the water impacted areas are older systems constructed prior to the adoption of the VCWWM and fire-flow requirements and there has been no change to the existing system. Others were designed under the

requirements of the VCWWM, but the system has not been maintained to be in compliance with the manual.

In September 2014, the Ventura County Public Works Agency (PWA) adopted the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the VCWWM with input from RMA and the Fire District. Revisions to the manual were made to bring fire-flow requirements in-line with current fire code. Water purveyors began reviewing their systems for compliance with the new edition of the VCWWM. Some purveyors not in compliance with the manual have made upgrades necessary to come into compliance. During this period, the Fire District continues to receive requests for new buildings and additions to existing 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 applicable County Ordinances.

## **Requirements:**

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

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

Additions up to 50% of the existing legally permitted floor area may be allowed.

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

### Accessory Buildings to One and Two-Family Dwellings (Group U):

New buildings and additions are allowed as follows:

#### Additions to Accessory Buildings:

- If the addition is to an existing legally permitted Group R-3, then the additions rule above shall apply.
- If the addition is to an existing legally permitted accessory building (Group U), then the addition shall not exceed 50% of the existing legally permitted floor areas and the total structure shall not exceed 400 square feet.
- 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 square feet 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 the required fire-flow is provided. This is due to higher fire-flow requirements than residential one and two-family dwellings.