

# MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

To: Thomas Thomas, City Manager

SUBJECT: Deferment of mandatory residential sprinkler requirements in the 2009 International Residential Code

DATE: 3 Dec 2012

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The Chief Building Official has been meeting jointly with his counterparts in the extended metropolitan area to review the 2012 model codes published by the International Code Council (ICC) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 2011 National Electrical Code (NEC). We have also listened to concerns from the QC Home Builders Association and Realtors regarding mandatory residential sprinkler provisions in both the 2009 and 2012 residential codes.

## BACKGROUND

The first edition of the residential code to incorporate mandatory residential sprinklers was the 2009 edition. Per our recommendation, the City Council included a deferment to 1 January 2013 for implementation. In the intervening years, no individual or organization has proposed elimination of the requirement at the national level. Both the 2012 and 2015 residential codes do or will continue to have that requirement (the 2015 code final action hearings will conclude in the fall of 2013). However, it is a perceived issue in the local area.

Both the state of Illinois and the state of Iowa have potential pending regulatory or statutory actions in the first half of 2013 regarding mandatory residential sprinklers. In both states, the respective offices of the State Fire Marshal are considering adoption of the 2012 National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101 Life Safety Code, which as-written requires residential sprinklers. There is also some indication that the state legislature in Iowa may take legislative action on the topic.

The Chief Building Official and the Fire Marshal met face-to-face with the Illinois State Fire Marshal and he unequivocally stated his intent to adopt the 2012 NFPA 101 code soon. That action will be subject to public comment by the Joint Committee on Administrative Review (JCAR), with an unknown outcome vis a vis the residential sprinklers. The state does need to adopt some form of the 2012 NFPA 101 code, as it is currently using the 2000 version, causing numerous design and enforcement issues statewide.

In conversations with the Bettendorf Building Official and later others in the QCA, the Chief Building Official proposed 31 July 2013 for a deferment date to allow time for the states to sort out what, if any, action might be taken that affects local jurisdictions. Bettendorf is moving to the 2012 codes (first reading) and included a residential sprinkler deferment to 1 August 2013 in the amendments, per our discussions.

The larger issue is the well-documented real-world and UL laboratory tested (poor) performance of unprotected engineered lumber floor joists in fires. We intend to propose alternatives to address that situation with the adoption of the 2012 codes. Two of the three alternatives do not require sprinklers; it would be the builder's choice which of the three paths to use. The general concept has been received well by local industry stakeholders. We (Building Officials) will meet Wednesday, 5 December 2012 to finalize the proposed wording and placement of the alternatives.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City of Rock Island extend the implementation date of the residential sprinkler requirement from 1 January 2013 to 1 August 2013, pending adoption of state-wide requirements or local adoption of a modified 2012 Residential Code.

SUBMITTED BY: Thomas G. Ayers, Chief Building Official  
Jeffery A. Eder, Community & Economic Development Director