

## Summary of Significant Changes for City of Rockville Chapter 9 Fire Safety Code

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 the State of Maryland has planned to make effective the 2012 editions of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1, 101, and their referenced codes and standards. Like our building regulations in Chapter 5, Buildings and Building Regulations, the City's fire regulations are composed of the State Fire Prevention Code – and Chapter 9 of the City Code which contains “local amendments” to the State Code. The State code is updated every three years while the Rockville Fire Safety Code was last amended in 1979 with no significant changes since. Due to significant formatting changes and additional requirements in the NFPA model codes since the last adoption of Chapter 9 it is necessary that the City Fire Safety Code be completely rewritten. A color coded version has been provided to the Mayor and Council which clarifies the origin of each requirement in the proposed ordinance. While the model codes do not change dramatically from one cycle to the next, a comparison of the code over 10 code cycles (approximately 30 years) would show some significant change in the requirements and formatting.

The purpose of this summary is to highlight the significant changes to the Rockville Code that differ from what the State of Maryland has put forth for adoption. The codes and standards adopted by the State allow for modification provided that the modification does not lessen the original requirements of the language as prescribed in COMAR 29.06.01.03. Often it is necessary to further amend the codes and standards adopted at the State level to make their enforcement and use align with current policy and procedure as well as to make more consistent the application of the codes and standards on a county basis.

Most of the local amendments proposed in this draft are:

- Requested by the Montgomery County Department of Fire Rescue Services as noted below with MCFRS in parenthesis
- To align Chapter 9 with Chapter 5 by adopting the administrative requirements of Articles I,III and IV of Chapter 5.
- To codify Rockville best practices

This summary focuses primarily on those amendments to the codes and standards that are specific to the City of Rockville. Several of the proposed local amendments have been requested by Montgomery County and are directed toward fire department operations. The County and City of Gaithersburg have also adopted similar amendments allowing for the Montgomery Department of Fire Rescue Services to operate in the same manner throughout the whole of the County.

The Department of Community Planning and Development Services has convened a code review committee comprised of area fire protection engineers, architects and other stakeholders to provide comment on the draft. This is in addition to the planned public hearing. The information received from both of these public forums will be invaluable in refining the information of the Code and ensuring that the requirements adopted are reasonable, consistent, in concert with other City and regional requirements, and enforceable by those responsible.

A large number of changes have occurred in Articles I, II, and III from the previously adopted version of Chapter 9 (1979). The changes occurring in these code sections are primarily to align

this Chapter with Chapter 5, Buildings and Building Regulations, of the City of Rockville Code. Changes to these articles that are new to the Code have been listed on the next page.

### **Significant amendments to Article I, III and IV In General**

- Define and provide specific requirements for fire watch activities.
- Provide additional definitions that occur throughout the Code such as State Fire Marshal, operating bay, and Authority Having Jurisdiction
- Various changes to align with the Building Code.
- Articles II and III specifically adopt the language of Chapter 5 for numbering of buildings and dangerous buildings.

### **Significant amendments to Article IV Fire Code**

- Provide specific requirements for emergency operations signage where required by the Code. (MCFRS)
- Eliminated the code requirement for fire extinguishers in certain occupancy classifications such as business, mercantile, apartment buildings, and assembly occupancies. (MCFRS)
- Refined the requirement for fire department access roads to include only buildings 600 sq. ft. and greater as well as defining the requirements for the road itself.
- Clarify the maximum distance from which the required fire flow for a building may be obtained based on the operational capabilities of the Montgomery County Department of Fire Rescue Services. (MCFRS)
- Define clearly the insurance requirements for fireworks exhibitions in the City of Rockville and aligning those requirements with the City's current insurance policy.

### **Significant Changes to Article V Life Safety**

- Define specifically when a fire watch is to be conducted.
- Define a shell business use and provide a base occupant load factor on which it is required to be designed to.
- Align the requirements for an emergency command center with the requirements of Montgomery County and the City of Gaithersburg. (MCFRS)

### **Significant Changes to Article VI Water-Based Fire Protection Systems**

- Provide minimum design safety factors for pipe sizing of commercial, residential and single family home sprinkler systems to match the requirements of Montgomery County. (MCFRS)
- Requires that the sprinkler control valve in single family homes be located to prevent accidental shut-off.
- Defines when 13R sprinkler systems may be used based on NFPA 101 definitions of building height.

### **Significant Changes to Article VII Fire Alarm and Detection Systems**

- Requires fire alarm system calculations to be based on the highest demand of audible devices employed in the system.

### **Significant Changes to Article VIII Special Hazards**

- Requires the identification of the each commercial kitchen exhaust hood by address and tenant where more than one is present.