



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Fire
Department No.: 031
Agenda Date: 10/14/25 Set Hearing
11/4/25 First Reading
11/18/25 Second Reading
Placement: BOS Item
Departmental 11/4/25
Administrative 11/18/25
Estimated Time: 45 Minutes on 11/4/25
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director(s): Mark A. Hartwig, Fire Chief/Fire Warden
Contact: Fred Tan, Fire Marshal
SUBJECT: **Hearing for Amending Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code with the Adoption of the 2025 California Fire Code**

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) On November 4, 2025 on the Departmental Agenda to consider the introduction (first reading) of an ordinance amending Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code to adopt the 2025 California Fire Code with local amendments as the enforcement Code in all areas within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District and all other unincorporated areas of the County where the Santa Barbara County Fire Department is the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ), unless otherwise specified by this ordinance;
- b) Read the title of the Ordinance and waive full reading of the Ordinance; and

- c) Continue the hearing to November 18, 2025, on the Administrative Agenda to consider recommendations, as follows:
 - i. On November 18, 2025, consider the adoption (second reading) of an ordinance amending Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code as set forth above; and
 - ii. Consider and approve adoption of a Resolution of Legislative Findings Supporting Amendments to the California Fire Code; and
- d) Find that the proposed actions do not constitute a “Project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 CCR 15378(b)(2), as they consist of “general policy and procedure making” and pursuant to 14 CCR 15378(b)(5) as they consist of organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text

In July 2025, the State of California adopted the 2025 California Fire Code, which incorporates the 2024 edition of the International Fire Code of the International Code Council with California amendments. On January 1, 2026, the 2025 California Fire Code becomes effective, and pursuant to Section 13146 of the Health and Safety Code, the Fire Chief of Santa Barbara County shall enforce within its jurisdiction the building standards and other regulations of the State Fire Marshal, namely the 2025 California Fire Code. In addition, Section 13869.7 of the Health and Safety Code states that a fire protection district “may adopt building standards relating to fire and panic safety that are more stringent than those building standards adopted by the State Fire Marshal and contained in the California Building Standards Code.”

There will be **no** fee increases with this proposed adoption. Fee categories have been updated to meet the 2025 California Fire Code changes. All Fire Department fee schedules have also been added as requested by the public.

Copies of the proposed ordinance will be distributed for review and comment to the cities of Buellton, Goleta, and Solvang, which are located in the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. In addition, copies will be sent to various industry groups and the other fire districts and departments in the County for their review and comment.

Discussion

On January 1, 2026, the State of California will enforce a new set of statewide fire and building-related codes under Title 24, including the updated California Fire Code (CFC), Part 9, which incorporates a number of code changes, new standards, and reorganizations.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department has historically proposed amendments to the CFC to address local needs, hazards, and firefighting capabilities.

Below are key changes for the Board to consider during this adoption cycle:

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code

New in 2025, California has adopted the 2024 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code as Part 7 of Title 24. This replaces previous provisions in the California Building Code (Chapter 7A –

Materials and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure) and the California Fire Code (Chapter 49 – Requirements for Wildland-Urban Interface Areas). The 2025 WUI Code consolidates requirements for building construction, defensible space, and fire-safe development to reduce wildfire risk. It will be adopted and amended in Chapter 10 of the Santa Barbara County Code, with the Planning Department, the Building Official, and the Fire Department implementing and enforcing their respective portions.

Updated References to Model Codes and Standards

Several referenced standards (e.g., NFPA, ASCE) have been updated. Some definitions have been clarified or replaced to match model code language.

Energy Storage Systems (ESS) Regulations

There are updated or new provisions concerning operational permits for energy storage systems, especially relating to their classification/exceptions (especially for one- and two-family dwellings/townhouses).

Fire Alarm/Signaling Systems

The NFPA 72 (2025 edition) has been adopted and will become effective along with the new Fire Code. Changes include revised requirements for visible & audible alarm notification, survivability of pathways, interfaces (e.g. elevators, emergency communications), and more.

Administrative and Reference Changes

There are renumbering of code sections, deletion of obsolete amendments, relocation of sections (for example, portions of CFC pointing into the new CWUIC), cleanup of cross-references, etc. These could affect permit processing and enforcement.

Background

The California Fire Code is updated on a triennial (every three years) cycle as part of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24), based on the International Fire Code with California-specific amendments. The updated code is adopted by the state and published mid-year, becoming effective statewide on January 1 of the following year. Local jurisdictions, including counties and cities, are required to formally adopt the new code. This regular update process ensures the Fire Code reflects the latest advancements in fire protection, building safety, and emergency response.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department adopts the California Fire Code during each three-year cycle as Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code, including local amendments that are justified by specific climatic, geographic, or topographic conditions. These amendments help ensure alignment with state standards, improve wildfire resilience, and support consistency in enforcement within the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts

The amendment and adoption of the 2025 California Fire Code will have no fiscal or facilities impacts, nor will it result in any fee increases.

Staffing Impacts

No staffing impacts result from the amendment and adoption of the 2025 California Fire Code.

Special Instructions

The Clerk of the Board shall notice the proposed ordinance in a newspaper of general circulation in the County of Santa Barbara by publishing a summary of the ordinance at least five days prior to the first reading and again within 15 days after adoption, including the names of those supervisors voting for and against the ordinance.

Attachments

Attachment A – Proposed Ordinance (Clean Copy)

Attachment B – Proposed Ordinance (Red Strikethrough)

Attachment C – Resolution of Legislative Findings

Attachment D – PowerPoint Presentation

Contact Information

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