

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: TIMELINE FOR FIRE ALARM SYSTEM RETROFITTING

BACKGROUND:

At the December 10, 2013 City Council Meeting, Council directed City staff to eliminate the fire alarm retrofitting requirements from Ames Municipal Code, Chapter 13, Rental Housing Code, and to rely on the existing language in Chapter 11 of the International Fire Code. Also at this meeting, the Fire Chief was directed to return to Council with a recommendation on an expected compliance timeline and to explain what is covered under the Fire Alarm System retrofitting code section. This concurs with section 8.202.9 *Amendments*, of the Ames *Municipal Code* Chapter 8, Fire Code, which reads:

Compliance with the provisions of this Chapter [IFC Chapter 11, Construction Requirements for Existing Buildings] shall be completed within a time frame approved by the fire chief.

Since the December meeting, the Fire Inspector and Deputy Fire Chief of Support Services have invested a significant amount of time in researching this code and the eventual impacts on the community. **Chapter 11 of the 2012 International Fire Code requires an approved fire alarm system to be installed in existing buildings and structures to provide occupant notification.** The Code defines a fire alarm system as “a system or portion of a combination system consisting of components and circuits arranged to monitor and annunciate the status of fire alarm or supervisory signal-initiating devices and to initiate the appropriate response.” By Code, an exception to this requirement would include occupancies with an existing, previously approved fire alarm system.

Inventory of Structures

This Code section requires compliance in several different types of occupancies. This necessitated City staff completing an inventory of applicable structures without fire alarms systems throughout Ames. The results of that inventory allowed staff to compile this list of occupancy type, definition, and number of non-compliant structures within the Ames city limits:

Group E: Educational occupancies - Day care through 12th grade

Examples: Ames Schools

Number of non-compliant structures: 0

Group I-1: Institutional occupancies - Residential care/assisted living facilities

Examples: Bickford Cottage, The Rose, etc.

Number of non-compliant structures: 0

Group I-2: Institutional occupancies - 24-hour medical care, hospitals, nursing homes

Examples: Mary Greeley Medical Center, Riverside North, etc.

Number of non-compliant structures: 0

Group I-3: Institutional occupancies – Correctional and detention centers, jails, prisons

Examples: Curt Forbes

Number of non-compliant structures: 0

Group R-1: Residential occupancies – Transient sleeping, boarding houses, hotels, motels

Examples: Super 8, Holiday Inn Express, Ames Motor Lodge, etc.

Number of non-compliant structures: 0

Group R-2: Residential occupancies – Greater than three stories or more than 16 dwelling/sleeping units, apartments, boarding houses (non-transient) with more than 16 occupants, congregate living facilities (non-transient) with more than 16 occupants, convents, dormitories, fraternities and sororities, hotels (non-transient), live/work units, monasteries, motels (non-transient), vacation timeshare properties

Examples: The Grove, Coconino Place, Cranford Apartments, Sheldon Munn, etc.

Number of non-compliant structures: 34

Group R-4: Residential occupancies – Supervised 24-hour custodial care for 5-16 persons, alcohol and drug centers, group homes, halfway houses, social rehab facilities

Examples: Duluth House, YSS, etc.

Number of non-compliant structures: 0

As can be seen from the above data, a total of 34 structures will need to be brought into compliance. Of these 34 buildings, it appears that a total of 14 different property owners (not including one 24-plex condo with multiple owners) with more than 800 dwelling units will be financially responsible for upgrading their properties. Four property owners are each responsible for more than 100 units, with another three that have between 40 and 80 units.

Onetime Costs

To help provide Council, and ultimately the property owners, with a general understanding of the onetime costs associated with retroactively installing a fire alarm system, some general estimates were obtained. It is important to note that these are not specific to any one type of building or type of construction. As can be seen from the table below, estimated one time installation costs for a fire alarm system vary depending on the units.

# of Units	Approx. Cost Range \$1,250 - \$1,875 / unit
18	\$22,500 - \$33,750
20	\$25,000 - \$37,500
22	\$27,500 - \$41,250
24	\$30,000 - \$45,000
26	\$32,500 - \$48,750
27	\$33,750 - \$50,625
30	\$37,500 - \$56,250
33	\$41,250 - \$61,875
36	\$45,000 - \$67,500
40	\$50,000 - \$75,000
42	\$52,500 - \$78,750
54	\$67,500 - \$101,250
56	\$70,000 - \$105,000

Source: Nelson Electric, Kurrent Electric, and CWSI.

Ongoing Costs

Also of note, installation costs are not the only costs incurred by the property owner, since fire alarm systems are required to be monitored. If the building is equipped with two hardwired telephone lines, monitoring costs start at \$30 per month. If the building is not equipped with hardwired telephone lines, options would be an internet based monitoring system or cellular telephone. Those monitoring costs start at approximately \$40 per month. Annual fire alarm service is also required, and is estimated to cost between \$100 and \$225 for a typical 16 to 24-unit complex.

Timeline

This subject was discussed at both the December 10th, 2013 and January 28th, 2014, council meetings. At the January 28th meeting, City Council suggested to City staff that a compliance date of July 1, 2020 would be acceptable and that it would add one year to the dates in the previous compliance timeline that Council had struck from Chapter 13 (Rental Housing Code) of the Municipal Code. City staff finds this timeline agreeable and recommends that July 1, 2020 be adopted as the official date for compliance. For the next six years, staff will mail annual written reminders to all property owners/managers regarding this upcoming compliance deadline.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Direct staff to adopt a date of July 1, 2020 for compliance with the fire alarm retrofitting provisions of International Fire Code Chapter 11, Construction Requirements for Existing Buildings.
2. Direct staff to adopt a date other than July 1, 2020 for compliance with the fire alarm retrofitting provisions of International Fire Code Chapter 11, Construction Requirements for Existing Buildings.
3. Direct staff to leave the fire alarm retrofitting provisions of International Fire Code Chapter 11, Construction Requirements for Existing Buildings with a date as-yet-to-be-determined by the fire chief.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Based on section 8.202.9 *Amendments*, of the Ames *Municipal Code* Chapter 8, Fire Code, which reads, "*Compliance with the provisions of this Chapter [International Fire Code Chapter 11, Construction Requirements for Existing Buildings] shall be completed within a time frame approved by the fire chief,*" fire alarm retrofitting is a code requirement for several structures throughout Ames.

Compliance with this life safety requirement could entail significant cost to property owners. Thus, it would not be unreasonable to allow an extended period of time for properties to be brought into compliance.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, directing staff to adopt a compliance date of July 1, 2020 for the fire alarm retrofitting requirement.