



California State Fire Marshal CODE INTERPRETATION

Date Issued	December 3, 2015	Interpretation	15-006
Topic	Garage Conversions to Dwellings Units and Residential Fire Sprinkler Requirements		
Code Section(s)	CRC Section R313.2		
Requested by	Randall Metz, Fire Marshal Carlsbad Fire Department		
Date Received	November 16, 2015		

Question 1: Is it the intent of the exception listed under California Residential Code (CRC) Section R313.2 to apply to the existing one- and two-family dwelling on the property or does it extend to alternations/additions to other detached structures anywhere on the property?

Question 2: Was it the intent of the CRC Section R313.2 to require residential fire sprinklers in new second dwelling units in the following scenarios?

Example A: A new dwelling unit is added to the existing detached garage (or other existing detached accessory structures).

Example B: An existing detached garage (or other existing detached accessory structure) is converted to a new dwelling unit.

Example C: An existing detached garage (or other existing detached accessory structure) is converted to a new dwelling unit and additional floor area is added for the new unit.

Answer: The State Fire Marshal's adoption of and intent of the exception to CRC Section R313.2 is to apply only to existing one- and two-family dwelling buildings located on the property that are undergoing an addition or alteration. The exception does not apply to other detached structures located on the property that are adding or converting into a new dwelling unit that is detached from the existing dwelling unit on the property.

Detached garages and accessory structures (typically Group U Occupancies) are not considered a one- or two-family dwelling (Group R-3 Occupancy). Detached garages and other detached accessory structure are made to comply with the California Building Code (CBC) when a change in use is made in accordance with CRC Section R110.2, this section further references CBC Section 3408. The CBC Section 3408 states "No change shall be made in the use or occupancy of any building... unless such structure is made to comply with the requirements of this code." When a detached garage or accessory structure are converted to a one- or two-family dwelling it is considered a change of occupancy, and the new occupancy must comply with the current codes. Therefore, residential fire sprinklers would be required in all detached garages and accessory structures converted to a one- and two-family dwelling.

Background and Intent of Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems for One- and Two-Family Dwellings as adopted and amended by the Office of the State Fire Marshal

In October 2008 and again in April 2009 the Office of the State Fire Marshal convened representatives from various disciplines to study issues concerning the water supply of residential sprinklers and the installation of residential sprinklers. The purpose of the two task groups was to provide information, recommendations, and suggested strategies for solutions to the State Fire Marshal. This was in preparation for a statewide residential fire sprinkler requirement for new construction scheduled for implementation January 1, 2011.

Reasons supporting residential sprinkler were numerous. They included:

- Vulnerable and special need populations are growing and require higher levels of protection than we commonly think of with able-bodied, English-speaking adults.
- Sprinkler fire protection systems are the best, first defense against life and property loss but are not infallible. Layered fire protection is the appropriate risk mitigation approach.
- Our life loss history in California continues to need improvement. Too many people still die in preventable, mitigable fires.
- Firefighter safety is important. More firefighters are injured or die in residential fires than any other occupancy.
- The State Fire Marshal is charged with setting the fire and panic standards for California and has done so with an open, participative, researched and professional process for this adoption.
- The impact of our amendments is not far-reaching or overly restrictive. They are reasonable, focused, limited to those buildings with the greatest risk of life loss, and economically neutral.

The adoption of residential automatic fire sprinkler systems was approved by the Building Standards Commission (BSC) on January 12, 2010 (with an effective date of January 1, 2011). This provision required residential sprinklers in all new one- and two-family dwellings.