



COUNTY OF PLACER
Community Development Resource Agency

BUILDING

Administrative Policy
Wildland-Urban Interface Code
CBC Chapter 7A

TO: Building Department Staff
From: Bob Martino, Chief Building Official
Approved: Chief Building Official, Bob Martino
Effective Date: January 1, 2008 **Updated:** August 4, 2009

ISSUE:

The proper application with the jurisdiction of Placer County of Chapter 7A of the 2007 California Building Code commonly referred to as The Wildland-Urban Interface Code, to clarify administrative application of this chapter, and to identify responsibilities of the Building Department and Local Fire Authority.

BUILDING DIVISION ANALYSIS:

The primary focus of this policy is to clarify the responsibilities of enforcement and the applicability of CBC Chapter 7A. Requirements can be said to fall within 2 basic categories; those that are related to building construction methods, materials and components, and those that relate to protection of the building through the defensible space requirements of California Public Resources Code 4291. This policy will also address applicability of these requirements to ancillary buildings under the Building Official's discretion.

BACKGROUND

As of January 1, 2008 the requirements of CBC Chapter 7A (Wildland-Urban Interface Code) will be effective throughout California in State Responsibility Areas (SRA). A large portion of Placer County is located in an SRA. This means that these requirements will apply to most building permits for new building construction processed by the Building Department.

As stated in the chapter, these requirements apply only to new buildings and structures; both commercial and residential. These requirements will not apply to additions, maintenance, or to remodels of existing buildings not originally built under these provisions. Applicability to ancillary buildings is at the Building Department's discretion.

The chapters aim is to create buildings that will perform better and be less vulnerable to the effects of Wildland fires. This is accomplished with the use of fire-resistant building materials, techniques, and products, and the creation of defensible space by reducing flammable material around the building.

The chapter also identifies requirements for certification at the time of plancheck approval, and final inspection certification that the building, as built, complies with the requirements of Chapter 7A. These requirements are applicable to all building permit applications for new building construction submitted to the Building Department after January 1, 2008.

POLICY:

This policy is established to develop and maintain consistency for interpretation and application of the provisions of CBC Chapter 7A.

1. The Building Department will have the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of this section that apply to building materials, systems and/or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings within an SRA Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area regardless of the Fire Hazard Severity Rating.

The Local Fire Authority will be responsible for the application and enforcement of those provisions that pertain to defensible space as prescribed in the California Public Resources Code 4291 Government Code Section 51182.

2. These requirements will apply to all new buildings (both residential and commercial) determined to be located in an SRA and that are determined to be classified as a Moderate, High, or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Commercial buildings may be exempted on a case-by-case basis, for special circumstances due to location and anticipated exposure, but only with approval of the Local Fire Authority as identified in #3 below.

3. Under certain conditions a commercial and industrial building may be exempted from these provisions by the Local Fire Authority having jurisdiction. Some, but not all of the conditions considered might be the location of the building, the amount of paving around the building, the buildings primary construction type, and/or location in relation to other development, or wildland area around the proposed building. In all cases the Fire Authority shall have the sole discretion and non-residential buildings shall not be plan checked or constructed without meeting the provisions of this chapter without the express approval of exemption by the Fire Authority having jurisdiction.

4. Plancheck certification required by this chapter shall be in the form of the Building Departments plan approval stamp. For buildings required to meet the provisions of this chapter, and not expressly exempted by the Local Fire Authority, the approval stamp shall certify, as defined herein, that the plans were checked for compliance with the provisions of Chapter 7A along with the other requirements of the code.

5. Field certification required by this chapter shall be in the form of the Building Departments issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. For buildings required to meet the provisions of this chapter, and not expressly exempted by the Local Fire Authority, the Certificate of Occupancy shall certify, as defined herein, that the building, as

constructed, is in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 7A along with the other requirements of the code. No Certificate of Occupancy shall be issued without first obtaining approval of the Fire Authority that the defensible space requirements have been met as required by the chapter, and to the Fire Authority's satisfaction.

6. The enforcement of the defensible space requirements of this chapter shall be the responsibility of the Local Fire Authority. Defensible space requirements are a provision of this chapter and as such it is the Building Department's responsibility to verify these requirements have been satisfied prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. It shall also be the responsibility of the Building Department to inform customers, at the time of plancheck and permit issuance, of defensible space requirements and the potential of being unable to finish or occupy the building if these requirements are not met. It shall also be the duty of the field inspector to follow-up with reminders while conducting routine field inspections.

7. The requirements of Chapter 7A, as it applies to ancillary buildings and structures, are at the discretion of the building department authority. For this purpose the following shall be required for detached ancillary buildings or structures. Attached ancillary buildings shall be considered additions for the purpose of imposing these requirements.

a. Buildings falling under the provisions of the CBC and local amendments for permit exempt structures shall not be required to meet the provisions of Chapter 7A.

b. Detached ancillary buildings that exceed 500 square feet, other than permitted qualified agricultural buildings, shall be made to meet the provisions of Chapter 7A, and the requirement for the first 30-foot of defensible space as prescribed in California Public Resources Code 4291, unless specifically exempted by the Local Fire Authority.

8. Plans submitted for a permit for an addition and/or remodel work on buildings not originally built or required to be built under the provision of Chapter 7A need not comply with the building material requirements or defensible space provisions. By contrast, plans submitted for a permit for an addition and/or remodel work on buildings that were originally required to be built under Chapter 7A provisions shall be subject to the material provisions of this chapter and the defensible space requirements. In order to facilitate this provision, the plancheck staff shall identify in PLUS, for future reference, when a building is constructed under the provisions of Chapter 7A.

9. Decks that require permits, regardless of whether the deck is associated with a building built under the provisions of this chapter or not, shall meet the construction requirements of Chapter 7A, and will be required to meet the defensible space provisions for the first 30 feet.

10. Re-roofs shall comply with the provisions of Placer County Code Chapter 15.

11. "Rebuilding" of existing buildings, especially residential structures, are of particular concern. In some cases a "remodel" reaches the point of replacing most, if not all, of the existing structure to the point where essentially a new building is the final product. Where these types of projects are submitted for a building permit and the proposed scope of work includes the replacement all of these components in their entirety: replacement of the roof covering, exterior siding, windows, and doors; for the purposes of applying the provisions of Chapter 7A, these types of projects will be required to meet the requirements of 7A as they apply to each of those components. Eave venting installed with the original construction that are not being altered can remain as originally installed.

Where the proposed scope of work includes replacement of the roof covering, exterior siding, windows, and doors, but it is difficult to determine if the overall project can be justified as a "Rebuild" the following test will be used.

- a. Determine the valuation of the building as it exists before proposed work, as you would for new. Calculate the valuation based on the current Building Department Valuation Table rates for living area, garage (if attached), porches, decks, etc.
- b. Determine the valuation of the proposed work using the current Building Department Valuation Table and Supplemental Valuation Table. If the valuation calculated exceeds the valuation established in Step A above by more than 50% then the proposed project for the purposes of applying the requirements of Chapter 7A shall be considered a "new building"

12. Existing permitted buildings, where a building permit is required due to a proposed change of occupancy, will not be subject to 7A requirements. This includes permit exempt agricultural buildings (setback permit) when converted to another use or occupancy requiring a building permit.