

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability

BILL: CS/CS/SB 1122

INTRODUCER: Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee, Community Affairs Committee, and Senators Simpson and Dean

SUBJECT: Florida Fire Prevention Code

DATE: April 10, 2013 **REVISED:** _____

| | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION |
|----|---------|----------------|-----------|--------|
| 1. | Toman | Yeatman | CA | Fav/CS |
| 2. | McKay | McVaney | GO | Fav/CS |
| 3. | | | RC | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. | | | | |
| 6. | | | | |

Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes |
| B. AMENDMENTS..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technical amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Significant amendments were recommended |

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 1122 establishes the following provisions related to the Florida Fire Prevention Code (FFPC):

- fire officials must enforce fire wall separation ratings for certain mercantile or business occupancies as defined in the Florida Building Code; and
- certain structures on agricultural property used in farming and ranching operations are exempt from the FFPC.

This bill amends section 633.0215 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Fire Safety and Building Provisions in Florida

The Division of State Fire Marshall, housed within the Department of Financial Services, is responsible for protecting Floridians from fire hazards pursuant to ch. 633, F.S. Section 633.0215(1), F.S., requires the State Fire Marshal to adopt by rule the latest editions of

the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) codes every three years. These NFPA codes serve as a base code for the Florida Fire Prevention Code (FFPC). Local governments enforce the FFPC as a minimum standard although they may adopt more stringent fire safety standards within their own jurisdictions subject to requirements provided in s. 633.025(4), F.S. The 2010 FFPC was adopted on December 31, 2011.

The FFPC operates in conjunction with the Florida Building Code (Building Code) adopted pursuant to ch. 553, F.S. The Building Code governs the design and construction of buildings and structures in the state and is developed and modified by the Florida Building Commission (Commission).¹ The Commission maintains and updates the Building Code and its component codes for plumbing, electrical, mechanical, energy conservation, accessibility, structural, and fire systems in buildings. The Building Code, like the FFPC, is adopted every three years and utilizes international codes as a foundation for Florida's base code. Enforcement of the Building Code is also similar to the FFPC: local governments bear this responsibility and may adopt more stringent code requirements within their own jurisdictions subject to provisions.²

Conflicts between the FFPC and the Building Code are resolved through coordination and cooperation between the State Fire Marshall and the Commission in favor of requirements offering the greatest degree of life safety.³ If the State Fire Marshal and Commission are unable to agree on a resolution to a conflict, the issue goes to a mediator.

Fire Rated Walls or Partitions in the FFPC

Both the FFPC⁴ and the Building Code⁵ require that where different parts of a building comprise different categories of occupancy, those buildings must provide passive fire protection systems to slow or prevent a fire from spreading from one part of the building to another. For example, if a restaurant abuts a day care center or a hotel, the codes will require a fire wall between the two occupancies rated to certain wall fire-rating. These fire ratings are often expressed in "hours," expressing how long the wall can resist a fire of a certain temperature.⁶ The rules are intended to protect life safety, slow the spread of fire, and reduce insurance rates by restricting the ability of a commercial tenant to offload his or her fire risk onto adjoining tenant occupancies.

Chapter 6 of the FFPC outlines several occupancy classifications for buildings and structures. A business occupancy is defined as one used for the transaction of business other than mercantile; a mercantile occupancy is one used for the display and sale of merchandise. A separated occupancy is one in which two or more classifications exist separated by a fire-resistance rated assembly. Fire resistance ratings are permitted to be reduced by 1 hour where the building is protected throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system.⁷

¹ Pursuant to s. 553.74, F.S., the Commission is a 25-member technical body appointed by the Governor subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) provides the Commission with administrative, technical, and legal support.

² See ss. 553.73(1)-(4) and 553.80, F.S.

³ See ss. 553.72(5) and 553.73(1)(d), F.S.

⁴ NFPA 101 s. 6.1.14.4.1, as specified in 6.1.14.4.2 and 6.1.14.4.3, and tables 6.1.14.4.1(a) and (b).

⁵ Florida Building Code sections 508.1, 508.2, 508.3 and 508.4.

⁶ Separations are categorized as 3-hour fire resistance-rated, 2-hour fire resistance-rated, or 1-hour fire resistance-rated.

⁷ In no case may the rating be reduced to less than 1 hour.

FFPC Classification of Agricultural Buildings

Inspection of agricultural buildings and surrounding property are classified using occupancies defined in the FFPC. Generally, these classifications will be business, storage, or industrial depending on the specific operation conducted within the structure or property; however, other occupancy sections may be applicable.

Exemptions in Chapter 633

Chapter 633 provides for the following current exemptions:

- A condominium, cooperative, or multifamily residential building that is less than four stories in height and has an exterior corridor providing a means of egress is exempt from installing a manual fire alarm system as required in s. 9.6 of the most recent edition of the Life Safety Code adopted in the Florida Fire Prevention Code.⁸
- Provisions of ch. 633, F.S., do not apply to owners of property who are building or improving farm outbuildings.⁹ This means that structures such as barns need not be constructed to the fire code nor are they subject to fine by fire marshals or inspectors.

Agricultural Property Classification

For property to be classified as agricultural land, it must be used “primarily for bona fide agricultural purposes.”¹⁰ “Agricultural purposes” include, but are not limited to: horticulture; floriculture; viticulture; forestry; dairy; livestock; poultry; bee; pisciculture, when the land is used principally for the production of tropical fish; aquaculture; sod farming; and all forms of farm products and farm production.¹¹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 633.0215, F.S., to require that a fire official enforce certain wall fire-rating occupancy separations as defined in the Florida Building Code. The ratings apply to one- and two-story structures that are less than 10,000 square feet whose occupancy is defined as business or mercantile.

The bill also exempts specified structures used in farming and ranching operations from the Florida Fire Prevention Code. To be exempt, the structure must be located on property classified for ad valorem purposes as agricultural, is part of a farming and ranching operation, employs fewer than 35 full-time equivalent employees, and is not used by the public for direct sales or as an educational outreach facility.

This exemption does not include structures used for residential or assembly operations.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2013.

⁸ Section 633.0215, F.S.

⁹ Section 633.557, F.S. Owners acting as their own contractors when building or improving farm buildings are exempt from the construction contracting provisions in s. 489.103(7)(a), F.S..

¹⁰ Section 193.461(3)(b), F.S.

¹¹ Section 193.461(5), F.S.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

According to Department of Financial Services (DFS), the proposed changes could result in an increase in insurance rates for the private sector and may also result in the requirement for additional fire protection systems such as automatic fire sprinkler and fire alarm systems.¹²

C. Government Sector Impact:

DFS predicts an indeterminate fiscal impact to local governments based upon individual community density and the staffing and equipment needs of fire departments.¹³

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

The Legislature may wish to consider whether the “and” at the beginning of line 23 ought to be an “or,” in order to include operations that are solely ranching or solely farming.

¹² Florida Department of Financial Services, *Analysis of SB 1122* (Mar. 14, 2013).

¹³ *Id.*

Occupancy Separation

While the FFPC and the Building Code contain similar occupancy classification and separation language, the DFS advises in a bill analysis¹⁴ that the codes differ on the separation requirements between a business and mercantile occupancy. The FFPC requires a two-hour fire rated wall or partition between these use groups. This is more restrictive than the Florida Building Code. Generally, the two codes agree on the other occupancy separation requirements.

VIII. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability on April 9, 2013:

The CS/CS removes a provision in the bill that allows local fire authorities to decrease fire flow requirements in rural areas. The CS/CS also clarifies the farming and ranching structure exemption from the Florida Fire Prevention Code, and modifies the exemption by applying the exemption to operations employing fewer than 35 full-time equivalent workers, instead of 25 full-time equivalent workers.

CS by Community Affairs on April 2, 2013:

- Revises specifications related to the decrease of fire flow requirements.
- Changes wall fire-rating enforcement provisions for certain structure occupancy separations.
- Modifies conditions that trigger an exemption from the Florida Fire Prevention Code for farming or ranching structures.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

¹⁴ *Id.*