HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/CS/HB 669 Alarm Systems
SPONSOR(S): Commerce Committee and Regulatory Reform Subcommittee, Maggard and others
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** CS/CS/SB 1140

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 111 **Y's** 0 **N's** **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/CS/HB 669 passed the House on March 4, 2022, as CS/CS/SB 1140.

Electrical contractors and alarm system contractors are certified by or registered with the Electrical Contractors' Licensing Board (ECLB) housed within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

An "alarm system" is defined as "any electrical device, signaling device, or combination of electrical devices used to signal or detect a burglary, fire, robbery, or medical emergency."

A fire alarm system agent is a person who is employed by a licensed fire alarm contractor or certified electrical contractor, and performs duties that require licensure as a fire alarm system contractor or certified electrical contractor. A fire alarm system agent must have an identification card that must be renewed every two years.

A "low-voltage alarm system project" is a project related to work on a new or existing alarm system that is hardwired and operating at low voltage or a new or existing low-voltage electric fence, and ancillary components or equipment attached to such system or fence. Instead of needing a permit to work on a low-voltage alarm system project, licensed electrical contractors and alarm system contractors need a uniform basic permit label, which does not require building plans and can be purchased in bulk.

The bill:

- Reduces the training to become a fire alarm system agent and the training to renew an identification card, if the person or agent has a certain fire alarm system certification from the National Institute of Certification in Engineering Technologies or the Electronic Security Association.
- Clarifies that a low-voltage alarm system project includes video cameras and closed-circuit television systems used to signal or detect a burglary, fire, robbery, or medical emergency.
- Provides that a local building department may not require a licensed electrical or alarm system contractor to provide plans in order to obtain a building permit for a "fire alarm system project."
    - A local building department may require a licensed electrical or alarm system contractor to submit a completed permit application and payment in order to obtain such permit.
- Defines "fire alarm system project" as:
    - A fire alarm system alteration of a total of 20 or fewer initiating and notification devices; or
    - The installation or replacement of a fire communicator connected to an existing fire alarm control panel in an existing commercial, residential, apartment, cooperative, or condominium building.
- Requires a building department that issues a permit for a fire alarm system project to require at least one inspection to ensure the work complies with the applicable codes.
- Requires an electrical contractor or alarm system contractor to keep plans for a fire alarm system project at the worksite and available for the inspector.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state and local governments.

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 18, 2022, ch. 2022-124, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2022.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Electrical and Alarm System Contractors – Current Situation

Contractors are regulated by ch. 489, F.S., which outlines the law pertaining to contractors in the state of Florida. Part I of ch. 489, F.S., covers contracting regulated by the Construction Industry Licensing Board (CILB) and pt. II of ch. 489, F.S., covers contracting regulated by the Electrical Contractors' Licensing Board (ECLB). Both boards are housed in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR).

Electrical contractors, alarm system contractors, and electrical specialty contractors are certified by or registered with the ECLB. Certified contractors can practice statewide and are licensed and regulated by ECLB. Registered contractors are licensed and regulated by a local jurisdiction and may practice within that locality.[1]

Electrical contractors may work on electrical wiring, fixtures, appliances, apparatus, raceways, and conduits which generate, transmit, transform, or utilize electrical energy in any form.[2]

Alarm system contractors may lay out, fabricate, install, maintain, alter, repair, monitor, inspect, replace, or service alarm systems. An "alarm system" is defined as "any electrical device, signaling device, or combination of electrical devices used to signal or detect a burglary, **fire**, robbery, or medical emergency."[3]

There are two types of alarm system contractors:[4]

- Alarm system contractor I:
  - An alarm system contractor I is a contractor whose business includes all types of alarm systems for all purposes, **including fire alarms**.
- Alarm system contractor II:
  - An alarm system contractor II is a contractor whose business includes all types of alarm systems for all purposes, **except fire alarms**.

Certified electrical specialty contractors are contractors whose scope of work is limited to a particular phase of electrical contracting, such as electrical signs. Certified electrical specialty contractors can practice statewide. The ECLB creates certified electrical specialty contractor licenses through rulemaking, and has created the following certified specialty contractor licenses:[5]

- Lighting maintenance specialty contractor;
- Sign specialty electrical contractor;
- Residential electrical contractor;
- Limited energy systems specialty contractor; and
- Utility line electrical contractor.

The scope of work for **certified electrical contractors** includes any work that an alarm system contractor is able to perform.[6]

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[1] *See generally* s. 489.505, F.S.
[2] Ss. 489.505(12) & 489.537(7), F.S.
[3] S. 489.505(1)-(2), F.S.
[4] S. 489.505(2)(a) and (b), F.S.; Email from Conner Mann, Legislative Affairs Coordinator, Department of Business and Professional Regulation, RE: Alarm System Contractors (Jan. 4, 2022).
[5] S. 489.505(19), & 489.511(4), F.S; Rule 61G6-7.001, F.A.C.
[6] S. 489.537(7), F.S.

Registered electrical contractors may install raceways for alarm systems.[7] They may also bid on electrical contracts, which include alarm systems as part of the contract, but they must subcontract the work on such alarm systems to an alarm system contractor.[8]

Fire Alarm System Agents

A "fire alarm system agent" is a person:[9]

- Who is employed by a licensed fire alarm contractor or certified electrical contractor;
- Who is performing duties which are an element of an activity that constitutes fire alarm system contracting requiring licensure as an alarm contractor or certified electrical contractor; and
- Whose specific duties include any of the following: altering, installing, maintaining, moving, repairing, replacing, servicing, selling, or monitoring a fire alarm system for compensation.

In order to be a fire alarm system agent, a person must:[10]

- Be at least 18 years of age or have evidence of a court-approved declaration of emancipation;
- Have not been convicted within the last 3 years of a crime that directly relates to the business for which employment is being sought.
    - A certified electrical contractor or licensed fire alarm contractor must obtain a completed fingerprint and criminal background check from the Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) for each applicant for employment as a fire alarm system agent.
- Have not been committed for controlled substance abuse or been found guilty of a crime related to controlled substances within the 3-year period immediately preceding the date of application for employment, unless the person establishes that he or she is not currently abusing any controlled substance and has successfully completed a rehabilitation course.
- Have **completed a minimum of 14 hours** of training from an ECLB approved provider.
    - The training must include basic fire alarm system technology in addition to related training in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) codes and standards and access control training, with **at least 2 hours** of training in the prevention of false alarms.

A person is not required to complete the required training to be a fire alarm system agent if they are:

- A certified electrical contractor;
- A registered electrical contractor who is doing electrical work up to the alarm panel;
- A certified or registered fire alarm system contractor;
- A journeyman electrician licensed by a local government;
- An alarm technician licensed by a local government that requires an examination and experience/training as a qualification for licensure;
- A non-supervising employee working as a helper or apprentice under direct, onsite, supervision by one of the above licensed individuals;
- A burglar alarm system agent employed by a fire alarm system contractor or certified electrical contractor; or
- Only monitoring a fire alarm.

[7] A "raceway" is an enclosed channel designed to hold wires, cables, or busbars. Mike Holt, Understanding Raceways, EC&M (Feb. 13, 2018) https://www.ecmweb.com/national-electrical-code/code-basics/article/20903368/understanding-raceways#:~:text=The%20NEC%20defines%20a%20raceway,permitted%20in%20this%20Code%20%5BArt. (last visited Jan. 4, 2022).
[8] S. 489.537(2)(b), F.S.
[9] S. 489.505(28), F.S.
[10] S. 489.5185(1), F.S.

A certified electrical contractor or licensed fire alarm contractor must furnish each of his or her fire alarm system agents with an identification card. A fire alarm system agent must have their identification card in their possession while engaged in fire alarm system agent duties.[11]

The card must be in a format approved by the ECLB, and must include:[12]

- a picture of the agent;
- the name of the agent;
- the name and license number of the certified unlimited electrical contractor or licensed fire alarm contractor;
- name and address of the business organization; and
- the signature of the contractor and the agent.

Each identification card is valid for 2 years after the date of issuance, and must be renewed every 2 years. In order to renew an identification card, a fire alarm system agent must:[13]

- Have an updated criminal background check from DLE.
- Complete **6 hours of continuing education** on fire alarm system installation and repair and false alarm prevention every 2 years from an ECLB approved sponsor and training course.

National Institute of Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET)

NICET is an organization that was established in 1961 to create certification for engineering technicians and technologists. According to NICET's website, over 148,000 technicians and technologists have received NICET certification.[14]

Currently, NICET offers engineering technician certification in the following fire protections areas:[15]

- **Fire alarm systems**;
- **Inspection and testing of fire alarm systems;**
- Inspection and testing of water-based systems;
- Special hazards systems; and
- Water-based systems layout.

Currently, there are four levels of fire alarm system certification with Level I being the lowest and Level IV being the highest, and there are two levels of inspection and testing of fire alarm systems with Level I being the lowest and Level II being the highest.

In order to obtain a Level II fire alarm certification, a person must:[16]

- Pass an exam; and
- Have at least 2 years of fire detection and signaling systems experience, which must include at least 12 months of fire alarm systems experience, including alarm and detection, notification, sprinkler monitoring, and interfaces and controls for agent releasing.

[11] S. 489.5185(4), F.S.
[12] S. 489.5185(4), F.S.; R. 61G6-12.003, F.A.C.
[13] S. 489.5185(4) and (5), F.S.
[14] NICET, *About Us*, https://www.nicet.org/about-us/ (last visited Dec. 30, 2021).
[15] NICET, *Certification Programs*, https://www.nicet.org/certification-programs/ (last visited Dec. 30, 2021).
[16] NICET, *Certification Requirements*, https://www.nicet.org/certification-programs/electrical-and-mechanical-systems/fire-alarm-systems/certification-requirements/ (last visited on Dec. 30, 2021).

In order to obtain a Level II inspection and testing of fire alarm systems certification, a person must:[17]

- Pass an exam; and
- Have at least 18 months of experience in the inspection and testing of fire alarm and suppression systems.

NICET certifications must be recertified every three years. Recertification is completed by upgrading a certification or completing at least two of the following:[18]

- Performing the associated technical tasks of the certification practice area as part of a person's main job;
- Completing additional education;
- Performing activities that advance the profession such as being a course instructor or serving on a committee;
- Working towards upgrading a certification or obtaining an additional NICET certification in a related area; or
- Passing a special recertification exam.

Electronic Security Association (ESA)

ESA is an organization that was established in 1948 to represent the electronic security and life safety industry. According to ESA's website, they are the largest trade association in the U.S., with more than 500,000 industry professionals employed by ESA member companies.[19]

Currently, ESA offers certification in the following fire protection areas:[20]

- Certified Alarm Technician Level I;
- **Certified Fire Alarm Technician Level II Fire**;
- **Certified Fire Alarm Designer Level III Fire**; and
- Certified Residential Fire Alarm Inspector.

In order to obtain certification as a Fire Alarm Technician Level II, a person must:[21]

- Be certified as an ESA Alarm Technician Level I;
- Have 24 months of work history or have been certified as an ESA Alarm Technician Level I for 24 months or more; and
- Have completed the following two courses and passed the examinations for the courses within the previous five years:
    - Fire Alarm Installation Methods course.
    - Life Safety Code course or International Building Code course.

[17] NICET, *Certification Requirements*, https://www.nicet.org/certification-programs/electrical-and-mechanical-systems/inspection-and-testing-of-fire-alarm-systems/certification-requirements/ (last visited Dec. 30, 2021).
[18] NICET, *Recertify*, https://www.nicet.org/recertify/ (last visited Dec. 30, 2021).
[19] ESA, *About Us*, https://esaweb.org/about/ (last visited Jan. 3, 2022).
[20] ESA, *ESA Certifications for Security, Sales and Fire*, https://esaweb.org/training/certifications/certification-types/ (last visited Jan. 3, 2022).
[21] ESA, *ESA Certified Fire Alarm Technician Level 2 (CFAT)*, https://esaweb.org/training/certifications/cfat/ (last visited Jan. 3, 2022).

In order to obtain certification as a Fire Alarm Designer Technician Level III, a person must:[22]

- Be certified as an ESA Fire Alarm Technician Level II;
- Have 60 months of work history in the field of fire alarms;
- Have a personal recommendation; and
- Have completed the Fire Alarm Designer course and passed the examination for the course.

ESA certifications must be renewed every two years. Renewal is completed by completing 24 ESA approved continuing education hours.[23]

Electrical and Alarm System Contractors – Effect of the Bill

The bill reduces the number of hours an applicant for employment as **a fire alarm system agent** is required to complete to 2 hours of training in the prevention of false alarms, from 14 hours of training, if the person holds a:

- Current Level II or higher NICET certification in Fire Alarm Systems or Inspection and Testing in Fire Alarm Systems; or
- Current ESA Fire Alarm Technician or Fire Alarm Designer certification.

The bill also reduces the number of hours a fire alarm system agent is required to complete, in order to renew their identification card, to 2 hours of training in the prevention of false alarms from 6 hours of training, if the agent holds one of the above certifications.

Alarm System Building Permits – Current Situation

State Fire Marshal

Florida's fire prevention and control law, ch. 633, F.S., designates the state's Chief Financial Officer as the State Fire Marshal. The State Fire Marshal, through the Division of State Fire Marshal (Division) located within the Department of Financial Services (DFS), is charged with enforcing the provisions of ch. 633, F.S., and all other applicable laws relating to fire safety, and has the responsibility to minimize the loss of life and property in this state due to fire.[24] Pursuant to this authority, the State Fire Marshal regulates, trains, and certifies fire service personnel and fire safety inspectors; investigates the causes of fires; enforces arson laws; regulates the installation of fire equipment; conducts fire safety inspections of state property; and operates the Florida State Fire College.

The State Fire Marshal also adopts by rule the Florida Fire Prevention Code (Fire Prevention Code), which contains all fire safety laws and rules that pertain to the design, construction, erection, alteration, modification, repair, and demolition of public and private buildings, structures, and facilities, and the enforcement of such fire safety laws and rules.[25]

The State Fire Marshall adopts a new edition of the Fire Prevention Code every three years. When adopting a new edition of the Fire Prevention Code, the State Fire Marshal must adopt the most recent

[22] ESA, *Certified Fire Alarm Designer (CFAD) Level III Fire Certification*, https://esaweb.org/training/certifications/cfad/ (last visited Jan. 3, 2022).
[23] ESA, *How to Renew Your ESA Certification*, https://esaweb.org/training/certification-renewal/#qualifying (last visited Dec. 31, 2021).
[24] S. 633.104, F.S.
[25] S. 633.202(1) and (2), F.S.

version of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1, Fire Prevention Code, and the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code.[26]

State law requires all municipalities, counties, and special districts with fire safety responsibilities to enforce the Fire Prevention Code as the minimum fire prevention code to operate uniformly among local governments and in conjunction with the Florida Building Code.[27] Each county, municipality, and special district with fire safety enforcement responsibilities must employ or contract with a fire safety inspector (certified by the State Fire Marshal) to conduct all fire safety inspections required by law.

The Florida Building Code

In 1974, Florida adopted legislation requiring all local governments to adopt and enforce a minimum building code that would ensure that Florida's minimum standards were met. Local governments could choose from four separate model codes. The state's role was limited to adopting all or relevant parts of new editions of the four model codes. Local governments could amend and enforce their local codes, as they desired.[28]

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew demonstrated that Florida's system of local codes did not work. Hurricane Andrew easily destroyed those structures that were allegedly built according to the strongest code. The Governor eventually appointed a study commission to review the system of local codes and make recommendations for modernizing the system. The 1998 Legislature adopted the study commission's recommendations for a single state building code and enhanced the oversight role of the state over local code enforcement. The 2000 Legislature authorized implementation of the Florida Building Code (Building Code), and that first edition replaced all local codes on March 1, 2002.[29] The current edition of the Building Code is the seventh edition, which is referred to as the 2020 Florida Building Code.[30]

Chapter 553, part IV, F.S., is known as the "Florida Building Codes Act" (Act). The purpose and intent of the Act is to provide a mechanism for the uniform adoption, updating, interpretation, and enforcement of a single, unified state building code. The Building Code must be applied, administered, and enforced uniformly and consistently from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.[31]

The Florida Building Commission (Commission) was statutorily created to implement the Building Code. The Commission, which is housed within DBPR, is a 19-member technical body made up of design professionals, contractors, and government experts in various disciplines covered by the Building Code. The Commission reviews several International Codes published by the International Code Council,[32] the National Electric Code, and other nationally adopted model codes to determine if the Building Code needs to be updated and adopts an updated Building Code every three years.[33]

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[26] *Id.* The NFPA is the National Fire Protection Association. Founded in 1896, the NFPA delivers information and knowledge through no more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy. NFPA, *About NFPA*, https://www.nfpa.org/about-nfpa (last visited Jan. 4, 2022).

[27] The Florida Building Code is the statewide building code for all construction in the state. Every local government must enforce the Florida Building Code and issue building permits. *See generally* ch. 553, F.S.

[28] The Florida Building Commission Report to the 2006 Legislature, *Florida Department of Community Affairs,* p. 4, http://www.floridabuilding.org/fbc/publications/2006_Legislature_Rpt_rev2.pdf (last visited Jan. 4, 2022).

[29] *Id.*

[30] Florida Building Commission Homepage, https://floridabuilding.org/c/default.aspx (last visited Jan. 4, 2022).

[31] *See* s. 553.72(1), F.S.

[32] The International Code Council (ICC) is an association that develops model codes and standards used in the design, building, and compliance process to "construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures." International Code Council, *About the ICC*, https://www.iccsafe.org/about/who-we-are/ (last visited Jan. 4, 2022).

[33] Ss. 553.73, and 553.74, F.S.

Enforcement of the Florida Building Code

It is the intent of the Legislature that local governments have the power to inspect all buildings, structures, and facilities within their jurisdiction in protection of the public's health, safety, and welfare.[34] Every local government must enforce the Building Code and issue building permits.[35]

It is unlawful for a person, firm, or corporation to construct, erect, alter, repair, secure, or demolish any building without first obtaining a building permit from the local government or from such persons as may, by resolution or regulation, be directed to issue such permit, upon the payment of reasonable fees as set forth in a schedule of fees adopted by the enforcing agency.[36]

To obtain a building permit an applicant must complete an application for the proposed work on the form furnished by the government entity.[37] A local government that issues building permits must post each type of building permit application on its website.[38]

A building permit is an official document or certificate issued by the local building official that authorizes performance of a specific activity.[39] A building official is a local government employee or a person contracted by a government entity who supervises building code activities, including plans review, enforcement, and inspection.[40]

Any construction work that requires a building permit also requires building plans and inspections by the building official to ensure the work complies with the Building Code.[41] Generally speaking, a permitted project that passes the required inspections is considered completed or closed.[42]

Uniform Fire Alarm Permit

Fire protection systems, including fire alarms, must be installed, repaired, operated, and maintained in accordance with the Fire Prevention Code and the Building Code.[43]

An electrical or alarm system contractor must file a uniform fire alarm permit application with a local government in order to obtain a fire alarm permit.[44]

The Uniform Fire Alarm Permit Application must include the following information:[45]

- The name and address of the owner of the property;
- The name, address, and license number of the contractor;
- A description sufficient to identify the property to be improved, including the property's address and legal description;
- A description of the work being performed; and
- The owner and the contractor's signature.

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[34] S. 553.72, F.S.
[35] Ss. 125.01(1)(bb), 125.56(1), and 553.80(1), F.S.
[36] *See* ss. 125.56(4)(a) and 553.79(1), F.S.
[37] S. 713.135(5) and (6), F.S.
[38] Ss. 125.56(4)(b) and 553.79(1), F.S.
[39] S. 468.603(2), F.S; S. 202, Seventh edition, Florida Building Code (Building).
[40] *Id.*
[41] Ss. 107, 110.1, and 110.3, Seventh edition, Florida Building Code (Building).
[42] Doug Wise, *Closing Inactive & Excluded Building Permits*, Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning & Building Department, Building Division, http://discover.pbcgov.org/pzb/building/BuildingCodes/PBO-126%20%E2%80%93%20Closing%20Inactive%20and%20Excluded%20Building%20Permits.pdf (last visited Jan. 4, 2022).
[43] Ss. 202 and 901.2, Seventh edition, Florida Building Code (Building).
[44] S. 553.7921(1); Ch. 19-140, Laws of Fla.
[45] S. 553.7921(3), F.S.

An electrical or alarm system contractor cannot install or replace a fire alarm until they obtain a fire alarm permit. However, an electrical or alarm system contractor may make repairs on a fire alarm **without a fire alarm permit**, as long as they have applied for the permit.[46]

Time-Period to Review Building Permit Applications

Current law requires local governments to review the following building permit applications within a specific time-period of receiving the applications:[47]

- accessory structure;
- **alarm permit**;
- nonresidential buildings less than 25,000 square feet;
- electric;
- irrigation permit;
- landscaping;
- mechanical;
- plumbing;
- residential units other than a single family unit;
- multifamily residential not exceeding 50 units;
- roofing;
- signs;
- site-plan approvals and subdivision plats not requiring public hearings or public notice; and
- lot grading and site alteration associated with a permit application.

When a local government receives an application for one of the above building permits, it must:[48]

- Inform the applicant within **10 days** of receiving the application, what information, if any, is needed to complete the application.
    - If the local government fails to provide written notice to the applicant within the 10-day window, the application is deemed to be properly completed.
- Notify the applicant within **45 days** of the application being deemed complete, if additional information is necessary to determine the sufficiency of the application;
    - If additional information is needed the local government must specify what additional information is necessary.
    - The applicant may submit the additional information to the local government or request that the local government act on the application without the additional information.
- Approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application within **120 days** following receipt of the completed application.
    - This period is tolled during the time an applicant is responding to a request for additional information and may be extended by mutual consent of the parties.

Over-the-Counter Permits

[46] S. 553.7921(1) and (2), F.S.
[47] S. 553.792(2), F.S.
[48] S. 553.792(1), F.S.

Generally, over-the-counter permits are building permits that need minimal or no plans reviewed by the local building official. However, an applicant must still fill out an application, and inspections are still required to close or complete the permit. Local government officials typically determine what types of permits qualify as over-the-counter permits for their jurisdictions. Over-the-counter permits can be issued in person or online depending on the jurisdiction.[49]

Typically, an application for a permit must include building plans. A local enforcing agency may not issue a permit until the building official or plans examiner has reviewed the building plans and determined that they comply with the Building Code, unless the project is not required to have plans reviewed by the local building official.[50]

Permits for the following projects are not required to have plans reviewed by the local building official:[51]

- Replacing existing equipment such as mechanical units, water heaters, etc.
- Reroofs.
- Minor electrical, plumbing and mechanical repairs.
- Annual maintenance permits.
- Prototype plans:
    - Except for local site adaptions, siding, foundations and/or modifications, and structures that require a waiver.
- Manufactured buildings plan except for foundations and modifications of buildings on site.

Alarm System Building Permits – Effect of the Bill

The bill provides that a local enforcement agency may not require a contractor to submit building plans or specifications in order to obtain a permit for a fire alarm system project. A local enforcement may require a contractor to submit a completed application and a payment for such permit.

The bill defines "contractor" as a licensed electrical or alarm system contractor.

The bill defines "fire alarm system project" to mean a fire alarm system alteration of a total of 20 or fewer initiating devices and notification devices, or the installation or replacement of a fire communicator[52] connected to an existing fire alarm control panel[53] in an existing commercial, residential, apartment, cooperative, or condominium building.

The bill provides that a local enforcement agency must issue a permit for a fire alarm system project in person or electronically.

The bill requires a local enforcement agency to require at least one inspection of a fire alarm system project to ensure the work complies with the applicable codes and standards. The contractor must keep

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[49] City of Boca Raton, *Building Permits and Inspections*, https://www.myboca.us/157/Building-Permits-and-Inspections (last visited Jan. 4, 2022); Charlotte County, *Permits*, https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/community-development/building-construction/permits/ (last visited Jan. 4, 2022); Nassau County, *Over the Counter Building Permit Application*, https://www.nassaucountyfl.com/DocumentCenter/View/13935/Over-the-Counter-Permit (last visited Jan. 4 2022); City of Sarasota, *Building and Permitting Online Services*, https://ftgportal.sarasotafl.gov/Permits/Home.aspx?microapp=c (last visited on Jan. 4, 2022).

[50] S. 553.79(2), F.S.

[51] S. 107.3.5, Seventh edition, Florida Building Code (Building).

[52] A "fire alarm communicator" is a device that automatically contacts first responders, if a fire is detected. Norris Inc., https://norrisinc.com/2016/08/12/alarm-system-communicators/ (last visited Jan. 5, 2022).

[53] A "fire alarm control unit" serves as the brain of the fire alarm system. It is a component of a fire alarm system that receives signals from initiating devices or other fire alarm control units, and processes these signals to determine part or all of the required fire alarm system output. National Fire Protection Association, *A Guide to Fire Alarm Basics*, https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Publications-and-media/Blogs-Landing-Page/NFPA-Today/Blog-Posts/2021/03/03/A-Guide-to-Fire-Alarm-Basics (last visited Jan. 3, 2022).

a copy of the plans and specifications at the worksite, and make them available to the inspector at each inspection.

Low-Voltage Alarm Systems – Current Situation

A "low-voltage alarm system project" is a project related to the installation, maintenance, inspection, replacement, or service of a new or existing alarm system, and attached ancillary components, that is hardwired and operating at low voltage, or a new or existing low-voltage electric fence, and ancillary components or equipment attached to such a system or fence, **including, but not limited to**, home-automation equipment, thermostats, **closed-circuit television systems**, access controls, battery recharging devices, and **video cameras**.[54]

Current law streamlines the permitting process for the installation of low-voltage alarm system projects that require a building permit. Instead of being required to obtain a building permit, licensed electrical and alarm system contractors may purchase uniform basic permit labels from local governments without providing detailed information about a project.[55]

A contractor may purchase labels in bulk for one or more unspecified current or future projects. Permit labels are valid for one year and may only be used in the jurisdiction of the local government that issued the permit label.[56]

Local governments may not charge more than $40 per permit label per project, and may not request any information in order to obtain permit labels except a contractor's identification information and proof of licensure. A local government may not require any other charge associated with the installation or replacement of a new or existing hardwired, low-voltage alarm system project.[57]

Licensed electrical and alarm system contractors do not have to notify a local government about a low-voltage alarm system project prior to commencing work on the project. However, a contractor must post an unused permit label in a conspicuous place on the premises before commencing work on the project.[58]

After completion of a low-voltage alarm system project, a contractor must submit a Uniform Notice of a Low Voltage Alarm System Project to the local government. A local government may take disciplinary action against a contractor who fails to timely submit the required notice.[59]

A local government may coordinate directly with the property owner or customer for inspection of a low-voltage alarm system project. If a project fails an inspection, the contractor must take corrective action in order to pass the inspection.[60]

A permit label is not required for any subsequent maintenance, inspection, or service of a low-voltage alarm system project that has a permit label.[61]

Low-Voltage Alarm Systems – Effect of the Bill

The bill clarifies that a low-voltage alarm system project includes video cameras and closed-circuit television systems used to signal or detect a burglary, fire, robbery, or medical emergency.

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[54] S. 553.793(1), F.S.
[55] S. 553.793(5), F.S.
[56] *Id.*
[57] *Id.*
[58] S. 553.793(6) and (7), F.S.
[59] *Id.*
[60] S. 553.793(9), F.S.
[61] S. 553.793(11), F.S.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill may have a positive economic impact on persons applying to be employed as fire alarm agents, and such agents, who have a current Level II or higher NICET certification in Fire Alarm Systems or Inspection and Testing in Fire Alarm Systems or a current ESA Fire Alarm Technician or Fire Alarm Designer certification. Such agents will not have to pay for more than 2 training hours in order to be employed as a fire alarm agent or to renew a fire alarm agent identification card.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.