



Sam Shahrouri
Deputy Director of TLMA
Building Official

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE BUILDING AND SAFETY DEPARTMENT

RESIDENTIAL FIRE SPRINKLER REQUIREMENTS

Per section 313.2 within the current California Residential Building Code (CRC), an automatic residential fire sprinkler system shall be installed in one and two family (duplex) *dwellings*. This requirement became mandatory as of January 1st, 2011.

The exception to this code section states that an automatic fire sprinkler system shall not be required for additions or alterations to existing *buildings* that are not already provided with an automatic residential sprinkler system.

There are various stages of construction types that range from a new primary residence, second unit residence (SUP), accessory dwelling units (ADU) and guest quarters, as well as conversions of one type of existing residence or building use to another. While all new one and two family residences and second unit residence qualify as a dwelling unit, and are therefore required to comply with the residential sprinkler requirements, the guest quarters pose a different challenge.

The term "Guest quarters" is a type of residence allowed per Ordinance 348 with specific provisions in terms of lot size, building area square footage and use. Kitchens and/or cooking facilities are *not allowed* in a guest quarters. As a guest quarter residence does not contain a kitchen, it does not meet the definition of a dwelling unit as a complete independent living facility per the California Building Code definition.

The term "Guest quarters" does imply overnight stay and would be classified as an "R" occupancy classification. The design and construction of a building to be used as a guest quarters shall comply with current adopted California Building Codes, in some cases, the primary residence may govern. The following information is a guide as to when Riverside County will require the installation of a residential automatic sprinkler system as required per the 2019 CRC:

- 1. New Single one or two family dwelling.** A newly constructed one or two family residence shall be required to comply with all California Residential Code automatic sprinkler requirements.
- 2. Additions to one or two family dwellings.** An automatic sprinkler system is required for additions or alterations to an existing home equipped with an automatic residential sprinkler system.
- 3. New second unit residence (SUP) and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU).** A newly constructed second unit or accessory dwelling unit residence shall comply with all California Residential Code automatic sprinkler requirements.

Note: The 2019 California Residential Code (CRC) Automatic Sprinkler requirements and exemptions are enforced by the Riverside County Building Department as required below:

1. Additions and Alteration Exemptions CRC 313.2: An automatic residential fire sprinkler system shall *not* be required for additions or alterations to existing buildings that are not already provided with an automatic residential fire sprinkler system, provided the total square footage of the structure is less than 3,600 square feet. If the total area of the structure is 3,600 square feet or larger, the California Fire Code (CRF) and/or Riverside County Fire Ordinance 787, may apply.
2. Second Unit/Accessory Dwelling Unit Sprinkler exemption: Where the primary residence is not equipped with residential fire sprinklers, the proposed detached second unit or accessory dwelling unit are proposed on the same lot, with the second unit or accessory dwelling unit is less than 1,200 square feet in area, an automatic residential sprinkler system is not required.

4. New Guest quarters (Primary residence governs):

- A. A newly constructed building for the purpose of being used, or a portion being used as a guest quarters *will be required* to install an automatic sprinkler system if the Legally permitted primary residence is equipped or required to be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system complying with the CRC.
- B. A newly constructed building for the use or portion of as a guest quarters will not be required to install an automatic sprinkler system if the legally permitted primary residence does not contain an automatic sprinkler system and the primary residence building permit pre-dates the automatic sprinkler system requirement.

5. Conversion of an attached or detached accessory structure or portion to a second unit residence, or guest quarters. (Change of occupancy type).

Where a building or structure is to be converted to living space as a second unit, an occupancy classification has taken place and the newly designated second unit residence will be required to comply with the automatic fire sprinkler requirements. Where a building or portion is to be converted to a guest quarters, the primary residence sprinkler requirements shall govern.

- 6. Primary Residence Conversion to a Second Unit.** Where a primary residence is to be converted to a second unit residence, or ADU, a Planning Department review and approval is required. Once the planning case has been approved, building plans must be submitted to the Building Department for both the construction of the new primary residence and the conversion of the existing primary residence to a second unit or ADU for the purpose of obtaining the required building permits. In this scenario, the newly constructed primary residence will require automatic sprinkler installation. The existing residence to be converted to the second unit residence would not require sprinkler installation as it would qualify under the exemption as an altered building.

7. Attached or Detached Accessory Structures 3600 sq. ft. and larger.

Accessory structures are attached or detached garages, workshops and storage buildings not used for human habitation. Accessory structure's 3600 square feet and larger may be required to install fire sprinklers to meet minimum fire flow requirements per table BB105.1 within the 2010 California Fire Code.

8. Demolition/Remodel/Re-construct

If an existing dwelling has been demolished, or partially demolished due to fire damage, natural disaster, remodel etc... there are two building permit type options:

1. Alteration/Rehab (BAR Type)
2. New Residential (BRS Type)

A new residential permit type requiring the installation of residential fire sprinklers will be required where any of the following conditions exist:

- A) If after the demolition work is complete, and the skeletal structure (wood studs and rafters) of the dwelling has been exposed, a new residential permit type is required.
- B) If more than 50% of the structure has been demolished, a new residential permit type may be required.

Please be aware that the above information is to be used as a guide, and a specific requirement for installation is per the California State Building & Fire Codes. The above information pertains to legally permitted buildings and structures. Where a building or structure has been constructed or placed on a property without permit, the case will be considered as new construction and all requirements will apply.