

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Committee Substitute

for

House Bill 2762

By Delegates Nestor, Horst, Clark, Hanna,
Longanacre, Martin, Hott, Riley, Honaker, Vance, and
Statler

[Originating in the Committee on Government
Organization; Reported on February 6, 2023]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §15A-11-5 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to requiring the State Fire Commission to propose rules relating to sprinkler protection;
3 providing that buildings commencing construction after July 1, 2023, housing emergency
4 fire, rescue, or ambulance services shall be protected throughout by approved automatic
5 sprinkler systems; and exempting emergency services buildings meeting certain criteria
6 that only house equipment and do not have sleeping areas or quarters within them from the
7 requirement.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 11. FIRE COMMISSION.

§15A-11-5. Promulgation of rules and statewide building code.

1 (a) The State Fire Commission shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance
2 with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code to safeguard life and property and to ensure the
3 quality of construction of all structures erected or renovated throughout this state through the
4 adoption of a State Building Code. The rule may include provisions regarding building
5 construction, renovation, and all other aspects as related to the construction and mechanical
6 operations of a structure. The rule shall include building energy codes. The rules shall be in
7 accordance with standard safe practices so embodied in widely recognized standards of good
8 practice for building construction and all aspects related thereto and have force and effect in those
9 counties and municipalities adopting the State Building Code: *Provided*, That each county or
10 municipality may adopt the code to the extent that it is only prospective and not retroactive in its
11 application; *Provided, however*, That buildings or structures utilized primarily for agricultural
12 purposes shall be exempt from the provisions of the State Building Code, the State Fire Code, and
13 any county or municipal building code or ordinance that is or may be adopted, such as the ICC
14 International Property Maintenance Code.

15 (b) The State Fire Commission may establish advisory boards as it considers appropriate
16 to encourage representative participation in subsequent rulemaking from groups or individuals

17 with an interest in any aspect of the State Building Code or related construction or renovation
18 practices.

19 (c) For the purpose of this section, the term "building code" is intended to include all
20 aspects of safe building construction and mechanical operations and all safety aspects related
21 thereto. Whenever any other state law, county, or municipal ordinance, or regulation of any agency
22 thereof is more stringent or imposes a higher standard than is required by the State Building Code,
23 the provisions of the state law, county or municipal ordinance, or regulation of any agency thereof
24 governs if they are not inconsistent with the laws of West Virginia and are not contrary to
25 recognized standards and good engineering practices. In any question, the decision of the State
26 Fire Commission determines the relative priority of any such state law, county or municipal
27 ordinance, or regulation of any agency thereof, and determines compliance with State Building
28 Code by officials of the state, counties, municipalities, and political subdivisions of the state.

29 (d) Enforcement of the provisions of the State Building Code is the responsibility of the
30 respective local jurisdiction. Also, any county or municipality may enter into an agreement with any
31 other county or municipality to provide inspection and enforcement services: *Provided*, That any
32 county or municipality may adopt the State Building Code with or without adopting the BOCA
33 National Property Maintenance Code. If a county adopts a property maintenance code or
34 ordinance including, but not limited to, the ICC International Property Maintenance Code, such
35 code or ordinance shall exempt all property used for agricultural purposes or otherwise cause
36 such property to be exempted from any such code or ordinance from enforcement. Any such code
37 that may be or is adopted by any county shall be and is unenforceable as to agricultural property.

38 (e) After the State Fire Commission has promulgated rules as provided in this section,
39 each county or municipality intending to adopt the State Building Code shall notify the State Fire
40 Marshal of its adoption.

41 (f) The State Fire Commission may conduct public meetings in each county or municipality
42 adopting the State Building Code to explain the provisions of the rules.

43 (g) The provisions of the State Building Code relating to the construction, repair, alteration,
44 restoration, and movement of structures are not mandatory for existing buildings and structures
45 identified and classified by the State Register of Historic Places under the provisions of §29-1-8 of
46 this code or the National Register of Historic Places, pursuant to ~~46 U.S.C. §470a~~ 54 U.S.C. §
47 302101 et seq. Prior to renovations regarding the application of the State Building Code, in relation
48 to historical preservation of structures identified as such, the authority having jurisdiction shall
49 consult with the Division of Culture and History, State Historic Preservation Office. The final
50 decision is vested in the State Fire Marshal. Additions constructed on a historic building are not
51 excluded from complying with the State Building Code.

52 (h) For purposes of this section, the term "agricultural purposes" has the same meaning as
53 is set forth in §15A-11-3 of this code.

54 (i) The State Fire Commission shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance
55 with the provisions of §29A-3-1 et seq. of this code relating to sprinkler protection, specifically
56 providing that buildings commencing construction after July 1, 2023, housing emergency fire,
57 rescue, or ambulance services shall be protected throughout by approved automatic sprinkler
58 systems: *Provided*, That emergency services buildings that house only equipment, are less than
59 5,000 square feet, and do not have designated sleeping areas or quarters within them, regardless
60 when constructed or commencing construction, are exempt from this requirement.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require the State Fire Commission to propose rules providing that buildings commencing construction after July 1, 2023, housing emergency fire, rescue, or ambulance services shall be protected throughout by approved automatic sprinkler systems, and providing an exemption.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.