

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

**2022 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

## **Senate Bill 44**

BY SENATORS HAMILTON AND LINDSAY

[Introduced January 12, 2022]



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 specifically to sprinkler  
3 protection for basements exceeding 2,500 square feet in new buildings and new buildings  
4 housing emergency fire, rescue, or ambulance services; and exempting emergency  
5 services buildings that only house equipment and do not have sleeping areas or quarters  
6 within them.

*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  
3 the 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,  
13 and any county or municipal building code or ordinance that is or may be adopted, such as the  
14 ICC 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  
22 agency thereof is more stringent or imposes a higher standard than is required by the State  
23 Building Code, the provisions of the state law, county or municipal ordinance, or regulation of any  
24 agency thereof governs if they are not inconsistent with the laws of West Virginia and are not  
25 contrary to recognized standards and good engineering practices. In any question, the decision  
26 of the State Fire Commission determines the relative priority of any such state law, county or  
27 municipal ordinance, or regulation of any agency thereof, and determines compliance with State  
28 Building Code by officials of the state, counties, municipalities, and political subdivisions of the  
29 state.

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

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

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

44 (g) The provisions of the State Building Code relating to the construction, repair, alteration,  
45 restoration, and movement of structures are not mandatory for existing buildings and structures  
46 identified and classified by the State Register of Historic Places under the provisions of §29-1-8  
47 of this code or the National Register of Historic Places, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. §470a. Prior to  
48 renovations regarding the application of the State Building Code, in relation to historical  
49 preservation of structures identified as such, the authority having jurisdiction shall consult with the  
50 Division of Culture and History, State Historic Preservation Office. The final decision is vested in  
51 the State Fire Marshal. Additions constructed on a historic building are not excluded from  
52 complying with the State Building Code.

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

55 (i) The State Fire Commission shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance  
56 with the provisions of §29A-3-1 et seq. of this code relating specifically to sprinkler protection as  
57 follows:

58 (1) Basements exceeding 2500 square feet (232 m<sup>2</sup>) in new buildings shall be protected  
59 throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system: *Provided*, That if basements exceed 2500  
60 square feet (232 m<sup>2</sup>), compliance with all fire protection requirements of this code is required.

61 (2) New buildings housing emergency fire, rescue, or ambulance services shall be  
62 protected throughout by approved supervised automatic sprinkler systems: *Provided*, That  
63 emergency services buildings that only house equipment and do not have sleeping areas or  
64 quarters within them are exempt from this requirement.