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## Relaxing Sprinkler Rules for New Homes and Remodels in Moraga and Orinda

*By Sophie Braccini*

The Moraga Town Council recently ratified the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's ordinance relaxing the rules regarding the installation of sprinklers in homes, large remodels and commercial buildings. In 2010 Moraga and Orinda agreed to regulations that were more demanding than the rest of Contra Costa County. The new text aligns the local guidelines with the rest of the county.

Fire Marshall Kathy Leonard explained how the 2010 rule required residential remodels to include a sprinkler system when it added over 50 percent of the existing home and reached over 2,500 square feet. "For commercial new buildings, any size called for the installation of sprinklers," she added. "Last year I granted a variance for a 750-square-foot concrete block bathroom. It would have cost more than the building was worth to add the sprinklers." The fire marshal met with the city of San Ramon and other agencies within the county to align common practice. The new size that will trigger the installation of sprinklers for remodels is now a total of 3,600 square feet and a 50 percent addition. For commercial buildings, 5,000 square feet of new building triggers the sprinkler requirement. "The new code also allows for flexibility in building construction," she said. "We are also allowing for alternate means in commercial building. If someone can prove to the fire district that there are detection systems, or specific construction that give a substantial amount of safety, then we will consider it as well."

The city of Orinda also ratified the new rule that will take effect in 2014. Leonard will present the resolution to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors on Dec. 3 (the board oversees the unincorporated areas covered by MOFD).

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[back](#)

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