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New MOFD fire code on the books

By Nick Marnell

When the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors ratified the new Moraga-Orinda Fire District fire code Sept. 22, a nine-month process that included negotiations with district municipalities, and beset with COVID-19 delays, finally came to fruition.

As a result, MOFD enacted its Ordinance 20-10, a document that outlines the elements of a new fire code which as of Oct. 1 became the new law of the district.

"By adopting the new fire code, the district will be enforcing a code which is consistent with state regulations," Fire Marshal Jeff Isaacs said.

A highlight of the new code is the revised deadline for exterior hazard abatement, pushed up from June 15 to May 31. Moraga, Orinda and Lafayette now share the same compliance date for abatement requirements. One of the most controversial features of the new code is the stipulation of an exterior fire hazard inspection as part of a real property transfer.

"Compliance with exterior abatement regulations has always been a requirement for a real property transfer," Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said. "It's only the reporting that's new." For ease of compliance with the inspection requirement, the district set up an online portal for sellers to self-report, and for agents to check the status of a property.

The ordinance needed the ratification of not only the fire district, the town of Moraga and the city of Orinda but also the Board of Supervisors, under whose jurisdiction lie unincorporated areas within the district. The new fire code is a product of significant coordination among the above agencies to ensure all individual concerns were addressed.

"The new fire code being very progressive helps us protect our citizens and their property from fire," Isaacs said. "We want our fire code to focus on all aspects of fire safety."

Isaacs noted that the new code supports the MOFD Wildfire Prevention Strategic Plan, a document that outlines district efforts to reduce the risk of a catastrophic wildfire. The plan covers internal and external fuels mitigation programs, wildfire preplanning and evacuation planning, early detection and notification systems, fire code updates, and community outreach and education.

The entire fire code can be reviewed at the district website. Under the Our District tab, click on Ordinances & Resolutions.

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[back](#)

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