



New Fire Code Regulations for High Rise Buildings



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A significant new requirement to install “Luminous Stairway Markings” in some existing buildings has made its way through the fire code adoption process and is now part of the fire code in the state of Washington (effective July 1, 2010.)

These changes include a new requirement to provide improved safety for individuals negotiating stairs inside a high-rise building by improving the visibility of stair treads, handrails, and obstacles, under normal and emergency conditions. The changes affect both new and existing buildings, which have occupied floors 75 feet or more above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access. This group includes commercial and retail buildings, as well as hotels, hospitals, classrooms and other structures of assembly.

The Cities of Bellevue and Seattle will be extending the effective implementation dates of these requirements, given the newness of the regulation and potential expense to building owners. Bellevue has announced a compliance date of December 31, 2011 and the City of Seattle is expected to establish a deadline shortly.

We are working with both municipalities, through the Building Operators and Management Association of Seattle/King County (BOMA), to ask for a compliance date not before December 31, 2012. BOMA argues that since the City of Seattle requires pressurized stairwells for hi-rise buildings, that smoke blocking visual acuity in stairwells is less an issue and therefore some options should be concerned in the implementation of the requirement.

Please contact Rick Shorett at (425) 455-1950 or ricks@suhrco.com for more information about the impact of this regulation on your building. Meantime, we will provide updates on the status and compliance activities as more information becomes available.

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