

January 19, 2022

To: City Council President Shand

From: Deputy Chief Steve Bradbury  
Building Commissioner Greg Earls

Re: Short Term Rental Units and Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems

The following are the requirements to provide automatic fire sprinklers in one- and two-family dwellings being used as Short-Term Rental Units.

One- and Two-Family Dwellings are covered by the 2015 International Residential Code and is revised in Massachusetts by 780 CMR 9<sup>th</sup> Edition.

780 CMR defines "Lodging House" as:

A one-family dwelling with five or fewer guest rooms where one or more occupants is primarily permanent in nature and compensation is provided for the guest rooms. A building licensed as a "lodging house" in accordance with M.G.L. c 140 22 through 31 shall comply with 780 CMR requirements according to its appropriate use and occupancy classification.


**780 CMR R313.2 One- and Two-Family Dwellings Automatic Fire Systems.** One- and two-family dwellings used as a lodging house shall be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with NFPA 13D. Only one- and two-family dwellings having and aggregate area greater than 14,400 square feet shall have fire sprinklers installed in accordance with NFPA 13D.

The definition is contrary to the highlighted portion of the code for lodging houses as it is defined as an owner-occupied single-family dwelling yet is referred in 780 CMR Building Code as a one- or two-family dwelling.

Furthermore, the second sentence of 780 CMR R313.2, referenced above and not highlighted, requires a one- and two-family dwelling only greater than 14,400 sq ft to have an automatic fire sprinkler system.

In short, we have determined that 780 CMR stipulates that owner-occupied STRUs require sprinklers yet "investment properties", in which the owner does not use as a primary residence, there is no such requirement.

Given the ambiguity and contrary nature of 780 CMR in this specific case, we respectfully request that the City Council not act on the licensing of STRUs until the Commonwealth defines its position with more clarity.



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Deputy Fire Chief Steve Bradbury



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Building Commissioner Greg Earls

cc. Mayor Sean Reardon  
Any Port, Planning Director  
Jennifer Blanchet, Zoning Administrator and Enforcement Officer