POLICY NUMBER: 23

APPROVAL DATE: December 13, 2018

SUBJECT: Standards for Construction Site Fire Safety

This guideline is developed by the Tri-chapter Uniform Code Committee and is intended to enhance regional consistency in application and enforcement of the Building Code. Please verify acceptance of this guideline with your local building department prior to its application.

ISSUE(S):

The purpose of this policy is intended to prescribe minimum safeguards for new building construction projects in order to provide a reasonable degree of safety to life and property from fire during construction involving combustible materials. This guideline is developed to promote best practices only and shall not be construed to be in lieu of any other applicable State or Federal laws or regulations related to construction site safety. The general contractor or other designee of the building owner shall be responsible for compliance with these regulations. When the term “shall” is used in this document, it means a mandatory requirement.

PROPOSED GUIDELINE:

I. Fire Protection Plan

A written Fire Protection Plan (FPP) shall be developed for significant or complex construction projects at the discretion of the building department. The plan shall be approved by the building department prior to issuance of a building permit. The written plan shall be consistent with the fire safety precautions as specified in this guideline. The general contractor is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the FPP and communicating it to all subcontractors. The FPP shall, as a minimum, include the following:

A. Pre-construction meeting
B. Removal of combustible debris
C. Maintenance of emergency access roads
D. Site plans and Floor plans identifying the locations of the following
   1) Portable fire extinguishers
   2) Locations of hose bibs during combustible construction
   3) Fire hydrants
   4) Standpipes
   5) Fire sprinkler systems including temporary shut-off valves (see below)
   6) Fire walls
   7) Compartmentalization walls
   8) Fire water meter locations
9) Detailed sprinkler plans during combustible construction
E. Site security plan
F. Name and contact phone number of the person(s) responsible for compliance with the FPP

II. Site Security

A. Controlled access points / site fencing
B. Qualified personnel approved by local Fire Marshal to perform fire watch patrols after hours
C. Detex (door exit alarm) check points located throughout buildings for fire watch patrol to verify during patrols
D. Security camera coverage during combustible construction. Utilization of portable cameras is recommended
E. Identify measures taken to prevent tampering of powering devices supplying power to security cameras

III. Fire Protection Systems

A. Fire Hydrants: Where underground water mains and hydrants are required for the building(s) under construction, they shall be installed, completed, and in service prior to combustible construction materials accumulating on site.

B. Standpipes: Where standpipes are required, the standpipes shall be installed when the progress of construction is not more than 35 feet in height above the lowest level of the fire department access. Standpipes shall be provided with fire department hose connections and outlets at accessible locations adjacent to usable stairs. The standpipe system shall be extended as construction progresses to within one floor of the highest point of construction having secured decking or flooring. Each floor shall be provided with a 2½-inch valve outlet for fire department use. Where construction height requires installation of a Class III standpipe, fire pumps and water main connections shall be provided to serve the standpipe.

C. Fire Extinguishers: Portable fire extinguishers shall be provided and shall be mounted on a wall or post at each usable stairway and such that the travel distance to any extinguisher does not exceed 75 feet. Mounting height to the top of the extinguisher shall not exceed 5 feet. Extinguishers shall not have less than a 2A10BC rating or as otherwise directed by the fire department. The general contractor shall ensure that an adequate number of individuals are trained in the proper use of portable fire extinguishers.

D. Fire Walls (Area Separation Walls): When fire walls (area separation walls) are required, the wall construction shall be completed (with all openings protected) immediately after the building is sufficiently weather-protected at the location of the wall(s).

E. Fire Sprinkler Systems: Where automatic fire sprinkler systems are required to be installed in new buildings, the system shall be placed in service as soon possible. For buildings of Type I or II non-combustible construction, activation of the fire sprinkler system may be delayed until combustible finishes, furnishings or equipment are installed, and the building or area is not used for combustible storage or any other purpose.

Immediately upon the completion of sprinkler pipe installation on each floor level, the piping shall be hydrostatically tested and inspected. After inspection approval from the fire department, each floor level of sprinkler piping shall be connected to the system supply riser and placed into service with all sprinkler heads uncovered. Protective caps may be installed on the active sprinklers during the installation of drywall, texturing and painting, but shall be removed immediately after this work
is completed. For system activation notification, an exterior alarm bell can be installed and connected to the sprinkler water flow device prior to installation of the monitoring system.

F. Fire Sprinkler Systems during construction: Fire suppression system must be installed and energized during combustible construction for floors below active wood framing level (highly suggested live sprinklers be in place by the third floor). A centralized shut-off valve may be installed under the following conditions to prevent accidental release of water during construction activities:

The shut-off valve must be located in a highly secure location.
1) Access to the shut-off valve is accessible only to site superintendent protected with lock and key.
2) The shut-off valve must be in an “open” status during non-working hours.
3) The shut-off valve must be under surveillance 100% of the time via security cameras.

IV. Special Fire Protection Systems – During the Installation of Combustible Framing Members

A. Compartmentalization Walls: Compartmentalization wall construction shall be provided as follows:

1) Interior walls shall be completed with plywood sheathing into areas not exceeding 2,500 square feet per compartment. Openings are not required to be protected.
2) In addition, corridor wall construction shall be completed with plywood sheathing in each 5,000 square foot segments of buildings. Openings are not required to be protected.
3) Wood protection coating application on wall construction and listing information.

Note: When wood protection coating products are used it is highly suggested for jurisdictions to carefully read product literature for verification of application method, installation, fasteners and additional technical information relevant to this guideline.

V. Other Combustible Materials

A. Combustible Debris: Wood, cardboard, packing material, form lumber, and similar combustible debris shall not be accumulated within buildings. Such debris, rubbish, and waste material shall be removed from buildings on a daily basis.

B. Oily Rags: Oily rags and similar material shall be stored in metal or other approved containers equipped with tight-fitting covers.

The permittee/contractor shall be responsible for all job site access, including ladders if necessary. The FPP shall be readily available to the field inspector.

The inspector may require visual inspection of (or spot check) as many luminaires as necessary to verify compliance.

REFERENCES: