Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

Community Risk Reduction Division **www.metrofire.ca.gov**

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Frequently Asked Questions for Certificate of Release Permits

What is a Certificate of Release?
A Certificate of Release (COR) is a fire department construction permit for a single-family dwelling, duplex, or ADU assessing access and water requirements from the California Fire Code and local county or city ordinances.

When is a COR required?
There are multiple situations that can trigger a COR requirement. New dwellings require a COR if portions of the proposed structure are unable to meet fire apparatus access requirements, water access requirements, OR if the total covered square footage of the structure is greater than 3,599 sqft. Additions to existing dwellings require a COR if the addition constitutes an addition of greater than 50% of the original covered square footage of the structure AND the new total covered square footage of the structure is greater than 3,599 sqft. Mobile, modular, or manufactured homes are considered “new dwellings” if being moved or added to a parcel regardless of manufacture date.

What is the process for getting a permit for a new single-family dwelling, duplex, or ADU?
Generally, the process begins with submitting a new dwelling project to the Building Department that has jurisdiction over where the parcel is located. A fire department hold or condition will be added to the application by the Building Department requesting a “fire letter” or “fire approval.”

This fire hold can be cleared by a qualified Metro Fire CRRD employee if a Certificate of Release review or fire sprinkler system installation are not required for the proposed project. If a Certificate of Release review or fire sprinkler system installation is required, then Metro Fire plan review(s) and inspection(s) are required and the fire hold can only be cleared by the Building Department once the customer provides a valid Metro Fire red inspection card.

At the time of COR project approval, Metro Fire sends links to download a digital copy of the approved plans and a digital red inspection card to the applicant. This red inspection card is what needs to be provided to the Building Department in order to release the fire condition on the building permit. Various inspections will be required by the Building Department and the Metro Fire area Inspector before final occupancy will be granted.

What is required for a COR plan review?
A Certificate of Release review requires a scaled and measurable site plan showing the proposed structure in relation to all other structures on the property, the property lines, complete public or private road fire access, and the closest fire hydrant. The hydrant can be depicted in its exact location, or a reference point such as a property parcel corner can have an annotated mark with a measurement to the hydrant from that point provided. Information on the type of hydrant (steamer or wharf styles) also needs to be noted. A copy of the fire flow letter from the local water purveyor is required dated within the last 12 months and calculated at a residual 20PSI if the parcel is to be served by public water or is within 900 ft of a public hydrant. If the parcel is not to be served by public water, the location of the well for the property on the site plan should be indicated instead of the nearest hydrant and the fire flow letter can be replaced with a well report. A Certificate of Release Application shall be completed with the submittal.

How do you submit a COR permit application?
Metro Fire's online portal can be reached most easily by going to our main website: metrofire.ca.gov
On the home page, use the furthest red icon on the right that says "Submit Plans." This will bring you to a landing page with links to the portal and step-by-step information guides if needed. The first link at the top of the page where it says "plans may be submitted online at:" is the one to use. Start a new application through the Tyler Technologies MobileEyes website, then upload the plans and associated supplemental info with your electronic submittal. Once an application is accepted, you will receive an automated email from MobileEyes advising that the application has been accepted and a job for it has been created in our system. It will be followed by a second automated email with your invoice information for that plan type. Click on the link in the email to open the invoice, then click on "pay invoice". Payment can be made by credit card or echeck. Once we have received confirmation the invoice has been paid, then the submittal will be assigned for review. The standard turnaround time for a COR plan review is 10 business days. Submittals not paid for within a two-week period will be automatically deleted from the portal system.

What are the requirements for approval?
For a Certificate of Release, access and water requirements shall be met per the code sections below. Upon looking at the requirements for these code sections, additional sections or items may be triggered based on the parameters of the proposed project.
Emergency Apparatus access to the site and proposed buildings:
2022 CFC 503.1.1 "Approved fire apparatus access roads shall be provided for every facility, building or portion of a building hereafter constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction. The fire apparatus access road shall comply with the requirements of this section and shall extend to within 150 feet of all portions of

the facility and all portions of the exterior walls of the first story of the building as measured by an approved route around the exterior of the building or facility."
Adequate water supply for the proposed covered square footage:
2022 CFC 507.1 “An approved water supply capable of supplying the required fire flow for fire protection shall be provided to premises on which facilities, buildings or portions of buildings are hereafter constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction.”
2022 CFC 507.3 “Fire-flow requirements for buildings or portions of buildings and facilities shall be determined by an approved method or Appendix B
Hydrant access:
2022 CFC 507.5.1 as amended by SCC no. 1711,“Where a portion of the facility or building hereafter constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction is more than [300] feet from a hydrant on a fire apparatus access road, as measured by an approved route around the exterior of the facility or building, on-site fire hydrants and mains shall be provided where required by the fire code official. Exception: for Group R-3 and Group U occupancies, equipped throughout with an approved automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1, 903.3.1.2, or 903.3.1.3, the distance requirement shall be not more than 600 feet.”

How is apparatus access measured?
When visualizing this requirement, imagine a fire engine parked on the side of the road closest to the structure and the firefighters dragging a length of hose around to the furthest back point of the building. The theoretical hose would be dragged around the outside of buildings or around obstacles and is not permitted to go underneath covered structures, over fences/obstacles, or through other properties. This measurement is taken in one direction wrapping around to the back of the structure, and then again wrapping around in the other direction. All portions of the proposed structure shall be reachable within 150 ft of a public road or approved fire apparatus access road.

How is hydrant reach measured?
This measurement is similar to the apparatus access measurement, but using the nearest hydrant as the starting point. For new residences that are required to be sprinklered, this measurement has a 600 foot length in each direction to wrap around to the back of the proposed structure and reach the entirety of the dwelling. Again, the theoretical hose would be dragged around the outside of buildings or around obstacles and is not permitted to go underneath covered structures, over fences/obstacles, or through other properties. For ADUs that are not required to be sprinklered due to the main dwelling not having fire sprinklers installed, the hydrant reach measurement can only be a maximum of 300 feet to the furthest portion of the proposed structure.

Why do I need to provide a fire flow letter?
A fire flow letter from the local water purveyor is required to assess if the proposed dwelling meets the fire flow requirements listed in the California Fire Code. The letter will comment on the quality and strength of the water supply for the nearest fire hydrant to the property in question. This document will need to be dated within the last 12 months of the Certificate of Release plan submittal to ensure the information provided within the report is current.

What are the requirements for a fire apparatus access road?
If a private road or driveway is to be proposed as a fire apparatus access road, it will need to conform to the standards outlined in FPS #3: Fire Apparatus Access Roads. The road must be paved with an all-weather surface in accordance with the zoning of the parcel, be a minimum 16’ wide if serving 1 or 2 dwellings or a minimum 20’ wide if serving 3 or more dwellings, with an unobstructed height of 13' 6", be able to hold a minimum of 80,000 pounds as verified by a geotechnical or civil engineer, comply with the turning radius and grade maximums and minimums listed in the standard, and must meet the Public Works Standard for roadways. Fire apparatus access roads in excess of 150' in length require an approved fire equipment turn-around.

Any fire apparatus access roads that share access between multiple property owners will require a signed road maintenance and/or road access agreement to be notarized and recorded with the county. A sample template is available on our Forms and Documents page.

If a private road or driveway was previously approved as a fire apparatus access road for any other dwellings or lot splits on the road, please include the prior fire department approval documents for the road and a copy of the recorded road access/maintenance agreement with your submittal as proof.

What are the paving requirements for an apparatus access road?
Fire apparatus access roads must be constructed in accordance with the zoning of the parcel served. If the zoning of an area is designated as RD, then the road must be paved with asphalt or concrete. If the zoning of an area is designated as AR or AG, the road is allowed to be constructed with a compacted, dust-free gravel substrate.

What are the geotechnical requirements for an access road?
The fire code official is authorized to require a technical opinion and report as per 2022 CFC Section 104.8.2. A geotechnical report is required whenever a private road is to be proposed as a fire apparatus access road.

For existing private roads that do not require modification to be compliant with Metro Fire dimension, turning radius, or construction requirements, a civil or geotechnical engineer shall provide a report that the existing road is able to meet the requirements of the Apparatus Access Roads Fire Prevention Standard

(FPS#3). The letter specifically needs to note that the road will be able to hold an 80,000 lb emergency response vehicle based on the existing soil conditions and road construction.

For newly constructed or modified roads, this is a two-part process. Confirmation by either a geotechnical or civil engineer confirming that the road is able to be built to the standards shown in FPS#3 is required at the plan review stage.

This can happen two different ways:

1) A civil engineer can be the one to draw up the plans for the road based on the Apparatus Access Roads Fire Prevention Standard and use his or her engineer stamp on the plans. This will suffice as proof that the engineer confirms the road will be able to be built to the required standards in the proposed location.

2) A civil or geotechnical engineer can write you a letter to attach to the plans drawn by a design professional that certifies the plans as submitted will be able to meet the requirements of the Apparatus Access Roads Fire Prevention Standard. The letter specifically needs to note that the road will be able to hold an 80,000 lb emergency response vehicle based on the existing soil conditions and list his or her construction requirements for the road.

As noted in FPS#3, upon completion of the road an additional report from the civil/geotechnical engineer verifying that the road actually was built to the required standards will be required by the Fire Inspector performing the final inspection to grant occupancy. This will be required regardless of which option above is chosen.

One place to start looking for a qualified engineer for this process is:
https://www.calgeo.org/find-a-geotech-near-you-residential-clients-

What if my driveway or private road has an access gate?

If the private road or driveway is to be proposed as a fire apparatus access road, the existing gate will either need to be removed or will need to be reviewed under The County Emergency Access Gates and Barriers Standard and permitted by all agencies having jurisdiction if the gate blocks access to multiple properties or dwellings.

Why would I install fire sprinklers in my ADU if my main residence does not have fire sprinklers?

As per Cal Fire Informational Bulletin 25-004, fire sprinklers are not automatically required in ADUs where the main dwelling does not have fire sprinklers installed. However, fire sprinkler installation is a possible alternative if other apparatus access, hydrant reach, or fire flow requirements are unable to be met under the proposed project.

Why would I need to install or upgrade a hydrant?
Sacramento County Ordinance number 1711, Rancho Cordova City Ordinance 28-2022, and Citrus Heights City Ordinance 2022-014 require that any existing single outlet (wharf style) fire hydrants must be changed to an approved steamer type hydrant as a result of:
1) the recording of a tentative subdivision or parcel map
2) a lot merger or split
3) the modification of an existing structure resulting in an increased required fire flow
4) a change in occupancy type, use, or character of a building that results in an increased life safety or fire risk as determined by the fire code official
5) the construction of a new building

What do I do if there are no public hydrants in my area?
Unwatered areas pose a unique increased risk to life safety. The installation of a residential fire sprinkler system with increased requirements can be used to mitigate this risk without requiring a complete Alternate Materials/Methods/Means Request process. These are proposed recommendations, not requirements:

- New ADUs where fire sprinkler installation is not required based on the primary dwelling not being protected with a fire sprinkler system can have an NFPA 13D residential fire sprinkler system installed with the standard minimum sprinkler density of 0.05 GPM/sqft approved in lieu of the required hydrant reach.

- New primary dwellings under 6,200 covered sqft that would normally require a fire flow of 1,000 GPM can have an NFPA 13D residential fire sprinkler system installed with an increased sprinkler density of 0.10 GPM/sqft approved in lieu of the required hydrant reach

- New primary dwellings over 6,200 covered sqft that would normally require a fire flow of greater than 1,000 GPM can have an NFPA 13D residential fire sprinkler system installed with an increased sprinkler density of 0.10 GPM/sqft and sprinklers shall be installed in normally omitted areas (bathrooms, closets/pantries) approved in lieu of the required hydrant reach.

Defensible Space Note:
It is highly recommended that fire-resistant landscaping, clearance of combustible materials and fuel management be provided within a 100-ft perimeter of the residential structure to establish a defensible space and reduce potential vegetation fire risk. Additional information regarding defensible space and fire-resistant landscaping materials can be found here:
http://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/defensible-space/
http://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/fire-smart-landscaping/

How many ADUs can I add to my parcel?
The number of dwellings allowed on a single parcel is under the jurisdiction of the Planning Department responsible for the area in question.

- Current ADU laws in the state of California allow for 1 JADU, 1 attached ADU, and 1 detached ADU for parcels zoned for single-family residences.
- Multifamily structures can create at least one ADU from existing non-livable space, up to 25% of the existing multifamily units if there is enough existing non-livable space available. Up to 2 detached ADUs are allowed on a lot with a proposed multifamily dwelling. Existing multifamily lots are allowed up to 8 detached ADUs (not to exceed the number of existing units on the property).

See the most recently updated Accessory Dwelling Unit Handbook produced and maintained by the California Department of Housing and Community Development for further information. The handbook is available at https://ahcd.assembly.ca.gov/system/files/2025-03/adu-handbook-update.pdf

Can I add a JADU to my parcel?
Only single-family dwellings are allowed to have a JADU.

Definitions:

Fire Apparatus Access Road - A road that provides fire apparatus access from a fire station to a facility, building, or portion thereof. This is a general term inclusive of all other terms such as fire lane, public street, private street, parking lot lane, and access roadway. (2022 CFC)

Public water - Water supplied by a local area commercial water purveyor to a facility, building, or portion thereof.

Road access/maintenance agreement - A legally binding document outlining an agreement between landowners for the access and upkeep of a private road that is or will be utilized as a fire apparatus access road.

Public way - A street, alley, or other parcel of land open to the outside air leading to a street, that has been deeded, dedicated or otherwise permanently appropriated to the public for public use and which has a clear width and height of not less than 10 ft. (2022 CFC)

Steamer hydrant - A type of hydrant with one 4 inch connection and two 2.5 inch connections.

Wharf hydrant - A type of hydrant with only a single 2.5 inch connection

AMR - Alternative Materials/Methods/Means Request. A Metro Fire permit type where an alternative protection can be proposed in lieu of a current Fire Code

requirement. “An alternative material, design or method of construction must comply with the intent of the provisions of the Fire Code and it needs to provide not less than the equivalent requirement in quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability, and safety.” (2022 CFC 104.10)

ADU - Accessory Dwelling Unit. An attached or detached residential dwelling unit that provides complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons and is located on a lot with a proposed or existing primary residence. It must include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same parcel as the single-family or multi-family dwelling is located. (HCD Handbook)

JDU - Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit. A unit that is no more than 500 sqft in size and contained entirely within a single-family residence. A JADU may include separate sanitation facilities or may share sanitary facilities with the existing structure. (HCD Handbook)

Single-family dwelling - A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one family, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation and existing as a separate interest of real property. (HCD Handbook)

Multifamily dwelling - A structure with two or more attached dwellings on a single lot. (HCD Handbook)