

I was recently made aware of a movement to set a 2 year moratorium on the city's fire sprinkler ordinance. I thought it was important for a response from the Fire Chief. I also felt that putting my thoughts and opinions down in writing would hopefully make my points better than me trying to state all of this orally.

My first point relies on you, the reader using common sense. A building that has fire sprinklers installed is a safer building for all involved. Safer environment for the occupants, safer for the customers, safer for the neighboring buildings and safer for emergency responders. I could easily dig up all sorts of facts and statistic's that support this, but I really don't think there is anyone who needs to be convinced that this is true. There is a reason that all new construction includes fire sprinklers. With this first point stated, I think it is also obvious that the Fire Chief would be pushing fire sprinklers as much as possible.

The second point addresses the reasons behind backing off on the fire sprinkler requirements. Really the only reason for the movement is financing. It may be only one reason, but as a home owner and a person whose job it is to run the fire department within an approved budget, I realize that money is a huge factor. I also realize that some projects in the down town area have been put on hold or abandoned due to the additional cost of fire sprinklers. I'm not just the Fire Chief of Fort Bragg Fire Department, I am also a life-long resident. I don't think there are many people out there that want to see our older buildings revitalized more than I do.

My third point reflects on my position in a local government agency. I have, what I feel is a pretty good handle on what my responsibilities are as your Fire Chief. Basically, I need to provide the level of service that our community expects. I know that the community is getting exactly that and more. Thanks to the volunteers the FBFD provides a level of service that I am very proud to be associated with. That train of thought also applies to local ordinances and fire prevention levels. The community has the right to set a level of fire safety they wish to have and the elected Fire Protection Board is responsible to set policies that I, as Fire Chief, am hired to implement. This should not and is not a personal

issue with me. If our community doesn't feel the need for fire sprinklers, I will find a way to live with that. I work for the community, they don't work for me.

I want to be clear on a few items that might come up after reading the above paragraphs. The community I speak of is the majority of people living in Fort Bragg. Should the majority of citizens opt to put a moratorium on the fire sprinkler ordinance, I would reluctantly follow the desires of the Fire Departments elected board. I would point out that making this a 2 year moratorium is in my opinion misleading. Thinking that in 2 years developers and property owners will have so much more money that this will no longer be an issue is simply wrong. I believe that I will not live to see the day when developers and/or owners come to the table with so much "extra money" that they would love to install fire sprinklers.

In closing, I want to make sure that I assure everyone involved that I respect both sides of this issue and the people fighting on them. Being passionate about our small city is never a bad thing. As Fire Chief, I also assure you that we (FBFD) will continue to do everything we can to protect life and property, with safety for the public and for our volunteers as our number 1 priority.

Steve Orsi

Fire Chief