

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Tom Hui, Acting Director, Department of Building Inspection  
Sonya Harris, Secretary, Building Inspection Commission

FROM: Alisa Miller, Clerk, Land Use and Economic Development Committee  
Board of Supervisors

DATE: March 22, 2013

SUBJECT: LEGISLATION INTRODUCED: FIRE CODE AMENDMENT

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The Board of Supervisors' Land Use and Economic Development Committee has received the following proposed legislation, introduced by Supervisor Wiener on March 12, 2013:

**File No. 130253**

Ordinance amending the Fire Code, Chapter 5, Section 503.4, to clarify what does not constitute an obstruction of a Fire Apparatus Access Road.

The proposed ordinance is being transmitted pursuant to Charter Section D3.750-5 for public hearing and recommendation. It is pending before the Land Use & Economic Development Committee and will be scheduled for hearing upon receipt of your response.

Please forward me the Commission's recommendation and reports at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102.

c: Carolyn Jayin, Department of Building Inspection

1 [Fire Code - Fire Apparatus Access Roads]

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3 **Ordinance amending the Fire Code, Chapter 5, Section 503.4, to clarify what does not**  
4 **constitute an obstruction of a Fire Apparatus Access Roads.**

5 NOTE: Additions are single-underline italics Times New Roman;  
6 deletions are ~~strike-through italics Times New Roman~~.  
7 Board amendment additions are double-underlined;  
8 Board amendment deletions are ~~strikethrough normal~~.

9 Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

10 Section 1. Findings.

11 The Board of Supervisors finds pedestrian safety and reduction of pedestrian fatalities  
12 at intersections and other legal crosswalks are important City policy objectives.

13 In December 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Better Streets Plan. A core  
14 principle underlying the Better Streets Plan is that streets that the City must design, build, and  
15 operate should strike a balance among all users of streets regardless of physical abilities or  
16 mode of travel, with the objective of making streets better and safer resources for all the  
17 people who live or work in San Francisco. The construction, design, and operation of streets  
18 must serve the paramount public interest in maintaining the livability of the City; taking into  
19 account, and striking a balance among, the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists,  
20 and those who travel by private automobile, as well as those who travel by bus, streetcar, or  
21 other mass transit; considering also such factors as street trees, storm water management,  
22 utilities, as well as vehicular circulation and parking. But in this mix of factors, pedestrian  
23 safety must be given a high priority.

24 The Board of Supervisors finds that installation of pedestrian "bulb outs" at  
25 intersections and crosswalks, extended from sidewalks or medians, will enhance pedestrian

1 safety. A pedestrian “bulb out” exists when the sidewalk or median at the intersection or at  
2 another legal crosswalk is extended into the street, thereby reducing the distance pedestrians  
3 must travel to cross the street.

4 The Board of Supervisors further finds that bulb outs will also force traffic to slow down  
5 and improve the capacity of vehicle drivers to see pedestrians.

6 The Board of Supervisors further finds that increasing the number of bulb outs in the  
7 City is consistent with the Better Streets Plan.

8 In adopting this ordinance, the Board of Supervisors does not intend to amend the  
9 California Fire Code, reduce the powers of the fire code official, or compromise fire safety.  
10 This legislation intends only to interpret what constitutes an obstruction of a fire apparatus  
11 access road under California Fire Code Section 503.4.

12 Section 2. The San Francisco Fire Code is hereby amended by amending Section  
13 503.4, to read as follows:

14 SECTION 503 – FIRE APPARATUS ACCESS ROADS

15 503.4 [For SF] Obstruction of fire apparatus access roads. Fire apparatus access roads  
16 shall not be obstructed in any manner, including the parking of vehicles. Subject to Health and  
17 Safety Code Sections 13104, 13108, 13114, 18941.5, and California Fire Code Sections 104.1, 1.11.2,  
18 and 503, the portion of the sidewalk or median, immediately adjoining and extending into a roadway,  
19 that has no utility pole, street light, street furniture, fire hydrant, trees, shrubbery, or other structure or  
20 natural growth attached thereto and that has a height that does not exceed six inches above the  
21 roadway shall not constitute an obstruction of a fire apparatus access road. The minimum widths  
22 and clearances established in Section 503.2.1 shall be maintained at all times.

23 Section 3. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective 30 days from the  
24 date of passage.

1 Section 4. In enacting this ordinance, the Board intends to amend only those words,  
2 phrases, paragraphs, subsections, sections, articles, numbers, punctuation marks, charts,  
3 diagrams, or any other constituent parts of the Fire Code that are explicitly shown in this  
4 ordinance as additions, deletions, Board amendment additions, and Board amendment  
5 deletions in accordance with the "Note" that appears under the official title of the ordinance.

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7 APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

8 By:   
9 \_\_\_\_\_  
Burk Delventhal  
Deputy City Attorney

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**LEGISLATIVE DIGEST**

[Fire Code - Fire Apparatus Access Roads]

**Ordinance amending the Fire Code, Chapter 5, Section 503.4, to clarify what does not constitute an obstruction of a Fire Apparatus Access Roads.**

Existing Law

Under the California Fire Code, a fire apparatus access road shall not be obstructed in any manner, including the parking of vehicles. The minimum width for a fire apparatus access road is 20 feet with an unobstructed vertical clearance of not less than 13 feet 6 inches.

Amendments to Current Law

This legislation will clarify that an unobstructed sidewalk that does not exceed six inches in height will not constitute a per se obstruction of fire apparatus access road. This legislation does not affect the authority of the fire code official under state law. A department may not act pursuant to this ordinance in contradiction to the determination of the fire code official.