

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 711
Economic Matters

(Delegate Barkley)

State Board of Plumbing - State Plumbing Code - Adoption of the International Plumbing and Fuel Gas Codes

This bill requires the State Board of Plumbing, by July 1, 2017, to adopt as the State Plumbing Code the 2015 International Plumbing Code and the 2015 International Fuel Gas Code. After July 1, 2017, the board must adopt each subsequent version of the International Plumbing Code and the International Fuel Gas Code within 18 months after it is issued. Rather than having the authority to broadly amend the State Plumbing Code, the board may adopt regulations to amend limited sections of the code only if the plumbing industry presents information to the board regarding better and safer plumbing materials and installation processes.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Board of Plumbing already adopts the State Plumbing Code by regulation. Therefore, the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR) can implement the bill with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Minimal. Local governments may already adopt a plumbing code of their choice as long as it is equivalent to or more stringent than the State Plumbing Code.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful. Small businesses that currently operate under the National Standard codes must train their employees in the International codes. DLLR advises that the costs likely include the purchase of books as well as the loss of time spent serving customers while business owners and their employees learn the alternate code.

Analysis

Current Law:

Plumbing

Plumbing fixtures, or other plumbing devices, must meet standards established in the State Plumbing Code or any applicable local plumbing code. The National Standard Plumbing Code (NSPC) is incorporated by reference as the State Plumbing Code. The code is updated every three to six years to reflect updated industry practices. State regulations currently incorporate by reference the 2012 NSPC Illustrated, with various modifications.

The board may adopt regulations to amend the State Plumbing Code and may adopt standards of the American National Standards Institute or any other nationally recognized organization.

A county must enforce the State Plumbing Code or adopt and enforce a local plumbing code that meets or exceeds the minimum standards of the State Plumbing Code. The board must enforce the State Plumbing Code in a county unless the board determines that the county is adequately enforcing the State Plumbing Code or a local plumbing code that meets or exceeds the minimum standards of the State Plumbing Code.

Fuel Gas

The 2012 National Fuel Gas Code is incorporated by reference in regulation. The board issues propane gas fitter certificates and apprentice, journeyman, and master natural gas fitter licenses. An individual must hold the applicable certificate or license to provide each service, subject to other specified conditions.

Background: The International Code Council (ICC) was established in 1994 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing a single set of comprehensive and coordinated national model construction codes. ICC develops and updates a suite of building codes – two of which are the International Plumbing Code and the International Fuel Gas Code. Typically, ICC codes are designed to be compatible with each other. According to ICC, the plumbing code is in use or has been adopted in 35 states, while the fuel gas code is in use or has been adopted in 43 states.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 643 (Senator King) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; International Code Council; Department of Legislative Services

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