

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5207

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As of February 9, 2011

**Title:** An act relating to the international wildland urban interface code.

**Brief Description:** Adopting the international wildland urban interface code.

**Sponsors:** Senators Pridemore, Nelson, Chase and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/31/11.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Karen Epps (786-7424)

**Background:** The State Building Code Council (SBCC) was created by statute in 1974 to provide analysis and advice to the Legislature and the Office of the Governor on state building code issues. The SBCC establishes the minimum building, mechanical, fire, plumbing, and energy code requirements in Washington by reviewing, developing, and adopting the State Building Code (SBC). The SBCC is required to regularly review updated versions of the model codes and to adopt or amend the codes as appropriate. Local governments may amend the SBC to provide additional standards.

The SBC includes the International Building, Residential, Mechanical, and Fire Codes, published by the International Code Council (ICC), as well as the Uniform Plumbing Code and Uniform Plumbing Code Standards, published by the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials. The SBC sets forth requirements through the provision of building codes to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants or users of buildings and structures throughout the state.

The ICC is a membership association that was established for the purpose of developing a single set of national model construction codes. The ICC has developed the model building codes that are currently used in most states, including Washington. The International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) is published by the ICC. The IWUIC establishes a minimum standard for home construction and maintenance in natural areas that are rated as a moderate or higher hazard for wildfire. The IWUIC contains provisions addressing fire spread, accessibility, and water supply for buildings constructed near wildland areas.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:** The International Wildland Urban Interface Code, published by the International Code Council, is adopted by reference to the State Building Code.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The bill adopts one of the recommendations that came from the Forest Fire Protection and Prevention Work Group. The bill establishes state-wide standards for home construction and vegetation management in wildland urban interface areas. It should have a long-term impact in reducing structural losses due to wildland fires. The adoption of the code will have three beneficial effects including to improve public safety, to improve firefighter safety, and to slow the rise in fire suppression costs. Washington has about 198,000 homes that are currently in a wildland urban interface area. The code is set up in three tiers: low, moderate, and extreme fire risk levels. Existing buildings would need to maintain the address markers, maintain the current fire access roads, and identify the existing access to hydrants and other water sources. The code also requires the creation of defensible space. This bill will build a public-private partnership for a common sense way of handling wildfires. This bill will save state dollars and money for local communities and be safer for our firefighters.

CON: This was adopted as an appendix to the SBC last summer. Jurisdictions have the option if they have the resources and the desire to adopt this code may do so without being required by the state. This should be handled at the discretion of the local jurisdictions. It would be better for the state to help local jurisdictions find the resources to take the activities on at the local level. The requirements in this code would mean that a local jurisdiction would need to designate the boundary and adopt a set of maps that would be considerably more expensive, \$40,000 to \$50,000 for the maps, and then the local jurisdiction would need to update its ordinances. These decisions should be made at the local level. The Forest Fire Protection and Prevention Work Group recommended that the SBCC adopt this code rather than have the Legislature mandate adoption of this code. This code would affect reconstruction and remodels, not just new construction.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Randy Acker, Department of Natural Resources; Kraig Stevenson, International Code Council; Mike Brown, Washington Fire Chiefs.

CON: Josh Weiss, Washington State Association of Counties; Brian Minnich, Spokane Home Builders Association, North Central Home Builders Association.