
Local Government Committee

HB 1899

Brief Description: Facilitating reconstruction of communities damaged or destroyed by wildfires.

Sponsors: Representatives Volz, Schmidt, Chapman, Graham, Rule, Leavitt, Waters, Low, Christian, Couture, McClintock, Barnard, Jacobsen, Timmons, Schmick, Dent, Cheney, Sandlin and Griffey.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires local governments, through June 30, 2025, to allow property damaged or destroyed by wildfire during a declared emergency to be repaired or rebuilt in compliance with the owner's choice of the current State Building and State Energy Codes, or the codes as they existed on January 1, 2023.

Hearing Date: 1/23/24

Staff: Kellen Wright (786-7134).

Background:

The State Building Code Council (Council) is a state agency responsible for the adoption of the State Building Code (Code). The Code establishes the minimum requirements and standards for buildings and facilities constructed in the state. The Code consists of a series of model codes, such as the International Building Code and the International Residential Code, that are adopted by reference, and any amendments that the Council makes to the codes. The Council is required to regularly review updates to the model codes and update the state Code accordingly. The model codes are updated every three years, and the Council's update process follows the model code cycle.

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

The Council also adopts the State Energy Code (Energy Code). The Energy Code must be designed to require the construction of increasingly energy efficiency homes and buildings. The Council must review the code as it applies to residential buildings every three years. The nonresidential energy code may not be amended more frequently than once every three years.

In 2023, Washington was subjected to a number of wildfires. On August 19, 2023, the Governor declared a state of emergency throughout the state due to the wildfires. The Governor has not issued a proclamation terminating the state of emergency.

Summary of Bill:

From the date that the bill is enacted through June 30, 2025, counties and cities must allow property that is damaged or destroyed by wildfires while an emergency proclamation from the Governor is in effect to be repaired or rebuilt to the owner's choice of the Code and Energy Code in effect at the time of the rebuilding or repair, or the Code and Energy Code that were in effect on January 1, 2023.

Building permit applications for property damaged or destroyed by wildfires during 2023 and covered by an emergency proclamation of the Governor may be approved and constructed in accordance with the Code and Energy Code in effect on January 1, 2023.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 12, 2024.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.