

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information and seek Council approval on the suggested amendments to these bylaws, through staff review and recommendations. The amendments are intended to address identified omissions from the present bylaw(s) and provide additional clarity to the regulatory intent of the amended legislation.

BACKGROUND

Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw

The Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw 14-100, currently in force, was adopted in 2014 after a substantive update from previous Bylaw No. 96-01. The current bylaw, while satisfactory at the time, does not fully capture the increased objectives of departmental operations and, impacts related to the development growth within the City.

False Alarms Bylaw

The False Alarms Bylaws No. 10-073 was adopted in 2010 and is intended to address and provide direction with mitigating response to multiple false alarms at the same civic location, access, contact person requirements, as well as associated levies assessed for response to four or more false alarms in a 12-month timeframe.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

As the City continues progression, issues of densification, building heights, increased concrete building processes through the addition of high-rise buildings and underground parkades, has the potential to impact effective fire ground emergency radio communications. With adoption of Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw 14-100 in 2014, the CREST radio system was operating on an analog technology platform. In recent years, CREST has transitioned to a digital technology platform with differing technological improvements and in some cases, factors requiring additional system “upgrades” to continue to deliver effective radio transmissions within the downtown core. With this implementation and focus on a continued assurance of an effective and efficient radio system, the current language in the bylaw does not effectively capture the requirements for potential installation, testing and maintenance, as well as addressing specific technical requirements for the system. The amendments in the proposed bylaw include direction on the installation of new equipment, maintenance of both existing and newly installed equipment and a new schedule that provides specific technical requirements. Emergency Radio Communications Bylaw are common in jurisdictions both locally and in the lower mainland. Staff drafted the amendments utilizing language from an existing emergency radio communications bylaw and, in consultation with representatives of CREST radio system.

The City of Victoria has experienced an increase in the use of mobile cooking operations, which range from food carts, trailers, and mobile food trucks since the time of the adoption of the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw. With the increased number of mobile cooking operations in service at special events or, in semi permanent locations across the City, amendments have been prepared in this proposed bylaw to define fire protection service requirements in alignment with recognized referenced standards, to ensure safe operations of these services. Staff researched local government regulations and the proposed bylaw is in alignment with mobile cooking operational requirements in other jurisdictions.

Lock boxes for building access are installed on buildings throughout the City. The current requirement prescribed in Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw 14-100 provides direction to every owner of a premise which is an apartment building or commercial building with shared common properties, to have a fire safety plan or, if equipped with various fire protection equipment, firefighting elevator, or locked access areas, to have installed at the owner's expense, a lock box approved by the Fire Chief. Proposed amendments would permit an option for owners who provide 24 hours staffing or short intermittent periods of time without staffing coverage, to be exempt from the lock box installation requirements. This will require the owner to ensure a building representative is "on scene" within fifteen (15) minutes upon notification of the Fire Department in a non-emergent situation where fire alarm malfunction or, potential issues exist within their building security.

Supplemental amendments to the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw include the consolidation of the language of the Smoke Alarm Bylaw, previously independent and referenced as City of Victoria Bylaw 92-018.

To address the aforementioned items, and in review of bylaws from other jurisdictions, staff have drafted amendments to the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw and False Alarms Bylaw for Council's consideration, which are attached to this report as Appendix B and D.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 (Recommended)

Adoption of the Proposed Amendments to the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw including consolidation of the Smoke Alarm Bylaw and, adoption of the amendments to the False Alarms Bylaw (recommended)

Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw

If adopted, an amended Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw will now consolidate the language and intent of the previously referenced Smoke Alarm Bylaw 92-018, providing greater clarity and direction on the installation of these life saving devices. Furthermore, amendments to the sections pertaining to emergency communications equipment and owner responsibilities, will further advance attention to the responsibility of developers and stakeholders in understanding the potential impact or, accountability towards ensuring emergency radio communications are preserved in a changing landscape. As amended, the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw encompasses all applicable details to further support the intent and directive of the British Columbia Fire Code, Fire Services Act and provides the City of Victoria with clear authority in the delivery of essential fire and life safety issues.

Furthermore, the Fire Services Act is reportedly being amended and restructured as the Fire Safety Act, which may require additional amendments to address any significant legislative changes to the parent legislative intent and direction.

Impacts:

- Increased clarification on financial recovery for extraordinary staffing costs
- Additional support for operation of Emergency Radio Communications through detailed technological requirements
- Direction on mobile cooking operations to reflect requirements for installation, service, and inspection processes.

- Clarity on lock box installations, parkade storage issues, fire safety plan (storage and location) and, open burning
- Increased efficiency in consolidation of the Smoke Alarm Bylaw into the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw.

False Alarms Bylaw

An amended False Alarms Bylaw will clarify and align legislative language to better reflect current operations, updates and further, clarify the financial considerations and operations management for the Fire Department.

Option 2

The Fire Prevention Regulation Bylaw, False Alarms Bylaw and Smoke Alarm Bylaw remain as adopted and does not provide benefit to the current operational and/or financial requirements, of the fire department or recognize the increased densification and growth within the City.

Impacts:

- Clarification of financial recovery not accurately addressed
- Inability to effectively support installation, maintenance and testing of Emergency Radio Communications equipment within the City of Victoria
- There will be no language to address safety, service and inspection requirements for mobile cooking operations within the City
- Smoke Alarm Bylaw remains as a standalone bylaw
- No option for building owner's on "lock box" installations subject to conditional assessment
- Lack of clarity on open burning permits, parkade storage and fire safety plan storage requirements

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

5. Health, Well-Being, and a Welcoming City

8. Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods

Impacts to Financial Plan

The proposed bylaw amendments are not expected to increase revenues to the City. It is forecasted that over the next years revenues will potentially decline as a direct result of conversions from oil burning appliances to alternate fuel sources, and the completion of submission of applicable fire safety plans for buildings within the City.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The City of Victoria Fire Department's operations are consistent with:

Section 15 – Community Well-being

- Victoria is a safe city, where everyone feels secure in public, in their homes and workplaces.

Section 18 – Emergency Management:

- Victoria is prepared to deal with known hazards and emerging threats, to limit the adverse impacts of events, and effectively manage emergencies.
- Victoria can respond rapidly and effectively to all emergencies, including events with long-term impacts and recovery times

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed amendments to the Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw, in addition to the amendments to the False Alarms Bylaw, are intended to identify and, further clarify the expectations and intent of the regulation as it applies to various stakeholders, including staff. Additionally, addressing the introduction of “new” service delivery models (mobile cooking and radio communications) is not effectively addressed in the present bylaw. As legislation is amended through the Provincial Government, staff will continue to conduct periodic review and updating of regulatory tools, to confirm alignment with service expectations, community safety, and direction in operational inspection, implementation, and confirmation.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Royle
Deputy Fire Chief

Paul Bruce
Fire Chief

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager: _____

Date: _____

List of Attachments

- Appendix A - Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No.1)
- Appendix B - Fire Prevention and Regulation Bylaw with Amendments
- Appendix C - False Alarms Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No.1)
- Appendix D - False Alarms Bylaw with Amendments