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Kittitas Co. CDS



## KITTITAS COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

To Whom It May Concern:

The Kittitas County Fire Chief's are requesting that Kittitas County discontinue the practice of granting variances to the fire code in the manner currently employed. By definition, a variance is considered when a property owner or their representative (such as a builder) is **unable to meet the fire code due to a unique set of circumstances**. After consideration of these circumstances, a variance (or exception) can sometimes be issued. Through the application process an equivalent level of safety must be demonstrated by the applicant. We are seeing variances granted strictly for aesthetic or economic reasons with no consideration as to mitigation of risk. When this occurs, development, an important part of our economy, becomes a liability rather than an asset.

Insurance companies are withdrawing coverage in large areas secondary to risk of wildfire. Not meeting the fire code adds to that risk and will collectively cause insurance rate increases. These costs pale in comparison to the liability in human life. Responders, residents and visitors are placed at risk due to sub-standard access and fire resistive construction. Our concerns are mostly focused on road standards which provide critical access and egress in wildfires for which we have seen variances granted without any mitigation proposed much less equivalency in public safety.

We seek enforcement of the fire code as adopted by Washington State and Kittitas County. When and if a variance is proposed, we would request that, if the proposal is inside a fire district and outside a city, that the fire chief for that district be notified and ensure that the variance mitigation meets or exceeds the fire code intent prior to approval. Your time and consideration in this matter are appreciated.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon D. Schmidt", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Brandon Schmidt  
President  
Kittitas County Fire Chiefs Association