

# INFORMATION BULLETIN

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## LIFE-SAFETY PEER REVIEW PROTOCOL

This Information Bulletin establishes the Life-Safety Peer Review (LSPR) protocol for multi-family residential buildings proposing a single exit stairway in buildings higher than three stories. Under the California Building Code (CBC) Sections 1006.3.4 and 104.2.3, and the California Fire Code (CFC) Section 104.2.3, such projects may be considered through an Alternate Materials and Methods Request (AMMR) when equivalency to prescriptive code requirements is demonstrated and verified through an independent life-safety peer review.

### I. Composition of the Structural Peer Review Panel

Each LSPR Panel must be approved by the Building and Safety Division (BSD) and Fire Department (FD) and include qualified professionals with no conflicts of interest:

- a. A California State Licensed Architect with experience in peer review and design of multi-family buildings similar to the buildings proposed.
- b. A California State Licensed Fire Protection Engineer with experience in peer review, fire, and egress modeling of the buildings similar to the buildings proposed.

### II. Selection Process for the SPRP

When the project design requires a Life-Safety Peer Review (SPR), the design team shall request that BSD and FD start the SPRP selection process as follows:

- a. The project team shall submit a complete project description and a Basis of Design describing the Life-Safety system and egress analysis method to BSD and FD.
- b. BSD and FD recommend a list of peer reviewers from the approved roster based on experience and expertise in the related field for the type of project.
- c. The potential peer reviewers and the project team are required to submit a written statement that none of the BSD and FD recommended SPRP members will pose a conflict of interest for the subject project including:
  1. Any member of the project team shall not have previously or currently participated in litigation with or against any members of the SPRP.
  2. Any member of the SPRP shall not have submitted an unsuccessful bid for this project.
  3. The project team shall not currently employ any member of the SPRP.
  4. Any member of the SPRP shall not be currently working on a project with any of the project team members.

- d. After it is determined that there is no conflict of interest, the project team shall finalize the SPRP selection based on BSD and FD recommendations. When the agreements are made, project team will notify BSD and FD who the final SPRP team members are.
- e. The contract between the SPRP members and the project owners shall adhere to and include the following information:
  - 1. All requirements of this Information Bulletin.
  - 2. Scheduled meetings for the approval of the Design Criteria, and final building Life-Safety design by the SPRP.
  - 3. Tasks of the SPRP during the project.
  - 4. Services of the SPRP to be provided on behalf of the Santa Monica Building and Safety Division and the Fire Department.
- f. The cost of the Peer Review Panel shall be borne by the owner/applicant and be independent of the plan review and permitting fees required by the city.

### III. Tasks of the SPRP

The primary tasks of the SPRP include the following and require a direct and personal participation by the peer reviewer for the project. Minor tasks may be delegated under supervision of the peer reviewer; however, the selected peer reviewer shall personally participate in all meetings and discussions, and shall be well versed in the details and specifics of the project:

- a. Review of the Life-Safety design.
- b. Meet with the design team.
- c. Provide recommendations, as needed, to verify the adequacy of the proposed Life-Safety system.

The scope of review of the structural design should include the following:

- a. Life-Safety and Egress design methodology,
- b. Life-Safety and Egress performance goals,
- c. Acceptance criteria,
- d. Fire and Egress modeling and simulation,
- e. Life-Safety and Egress design and results,
- f. Drawings and specifications

Once the Life-Safety and Egress design is deemed adequate, the SPRP will provide the following approved letters:

- a. A letter to BSD and FD indicating that the design criteria is accepted by the SPRP
- b. A letter to BSD and FD indicating that the final building Life-Safety design is deemed adequate and meets the agreed upon design criteria.

#### IV. SPRP Communication Process Requirements

The developer and the SPRP shall adhere to the following requirements during the SPR process:

- a. Correspondence:
  1. All communication, including phone calls, between the project design team/owner and the peer reviewers shall be directed through BSD and FD staff.
  2. The project design team shall submit initial plans to BSD and FD staff. Building and Safety Division staff will forward the initial plans to the peer reviewers.
  3. Emails containing responses and comments sent between the project design team/owner and SPRP shall include BSD staff as recipients.
  4. A comment log shall be maintained with the SPRP's comments and Architect of Record's written responses.
- b. Meetings:
  1. Meeting schedules throughout the SPR process shall be included as part of the agreement between BSD and FD, developer and SPRP.
  2. All meetings between the SPRP and design team or developer for the project shall be held in the City Hall East as much as feasibly possible or be held through online telephonic conference calls.
  3. An explicit schedule for regular meetings shall be included in the contract between the developer and peer reviewers. The meetings shall be held until the Life-Safety and Egress design criteria are approved by the SPRP. After these approvals, the frequency of the meetings may be changed or individual SPRP members may miss meetings based on the needs of the project, if both the SPRP and the design teams decide and confirm the agreement in writing.

The SPRP shall take into consideration the project schedule and be readily available for full participation to ensure timely review during the peer review process.

#### V. How to Qualify a Building and Safety Division Structural/Seismic Peer Reviewer

Architects and Fire protection Engineers interested in participating as an SPRP member shall send the following to BSD and FD for review and evaluation:

- a. Resume indicating the peer reviewer's experience.
- b. List of projects that the candidate has been in responsible charge for the design, analysis, or peer review.

#### VI. References

- a. City of Santa Monica IB-2025-01: [Single Exit Stairway Provisions for Multifamily Buildings Over 3 Stories](#)

Submit resumes and project lists via email to Sia Poursabahian at [Sia.Poursabahian@SantaMonica.gov](mailto:Sia.Poursabahian@SantaMonica.gov).