



STATE OF WASHINGTON
STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

May 2018
Log No. _____

1. State Building Code to be Amended:

- ☐ International Building Code
- ☐ ICC ANSI A117.1 Accessibility Code
- ☐ International Existing Building Code
- ☐ International Residential Code
- ☒ International Fire Code
- ☐ Uniform Plumbing Code

- ☐ International Mechanical Code
- ☐ International Fuel Gas Code
- ☐ NFPA 54 National Fuel Gas Code
- ☐ NFPA 58 Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code
- ☐ Wildland Urban Interface Code

For the Washington State Energy Code, please see specialized [energy code forms](#)

Section(s):
504.1

Title:
Required Access

2. Proponent Name (Specific local government, organization or individual):

Proponent: Dave Kokot, P.E.
Title: Past President, Washington State Association of Fire Marshals
Date: April 18, 2025

3. Designated Contact Person:

Name: Dave Kokot, P.E.
Title: Past President, Washington State Association of Fire Marshals
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- 4. Proposed Code Amendment.** Reproduce the section to be amended by underlining all added language, striking through all deleted language. Insert new sections in the appropriate place in the code in order to continue the established numbering system of the code. If more than one section is proposed for amendment or more than one page is needed for reproducing the affected section of the code, additional pages may be attached.

Clearly state if the proposal modifies an existing amendment or if a new amendment is needed. If the proposal modifies an **existing amendment**, show the modifications to the existing amendment by underlining all added language and striking through all deleted language. If a new amendment is needed, show the modifications to the **model code** by underlining all added language and striking through all deleted language.

Code(s) IFC Section(s) 504.1

Amend section to read as follows:

New Section – 504.1.1

504.1.1 Width. For jurisdictions that do not specify a minimum width, a minimum of 5 feet clear width is required for access to building entrances that do not face the street, alley, or parking lot.

Exceptions:

1. Buildings provided with an approved automatic fire sprinkler system can be reduced to a 4 foot clear width.
2. Shared access pathways between buildings on adjacent lots.

- 5. Briefly explain your proposed amendment, including the purpose, benefits and problems addressed.** Specifically note any impacts or benefits to business, and specify construction types, industries and services that would be affected. Finally, please note any potential impact on enforcement such as special reporting requirements or additional inspections required.

Emergency responders are seeing a problem with one section of the Fire Code that has not been an issue until the recent “housing crisis” has pushed development of more than 2 dwelling units on a single family residential parcel. In many cases for new development, the access to the dwelling units is not facing the street or the alley, but is located at the side of the structure facing the adjacent property line. This can be further compounded by fencing between parcels. We have seen access reduced to 3’ between the fence and the building. For instances that have more than one dwelling having access to the side of the structure, open doors pose an additional obstruction for response. Another issue for Spokane and other areas that experience winter storms is how snow removal can be accomplished.

Access to the exterior doors is addressed in IFC Section 504.1:

504.1 Required Access

Exterior doors and openings required by this code or the [International Building Code](#) shall be maintained readily accessible for emergency [access](#) by the fire department. An [approved access](#) walkway leading from [fire apparatus access roads](#) to exterior openings shall be provided where required by the [fire code official](#).

The issue is that there is no specific dimension provided in the Code, so local Building Officials and Planning Officials are not recognizing that emergency access needs are warranted.

The City of Vancouver has a local amendment that requires a minimum of 5' for the pathways, which they are calling emergency pedestrian access paths. We have done considerable research on gurney and first responder dimensions (yes, there is information about a typical fire fighter!). It was determined that the 5 foot width is justified. In discussions with our Fire Marshal and other first responders, we feel that if the building has fire sprinklers, the width could be reduced to 4' – as it would probably result in no hoses along the pathway.

6. Specify what criteria this proposal meets. You may select more than one.

- ☒ The amendment is needed to address a critical life/safety need.
- ☐ The amendment clarifies the intent or application of the code.
- ☐ The amendment is needed to address a specific state policy or statute.
- ☐ The amendment is needed for consistency with state or federal regulations.
- ☐ The amendment is needed to address a unique character of the state.
- ☐ The amendment corrects errors and omissions.

We consider this to be a critical need and request that it be considered as an emergency rule.

7. Is there an economic impact: ☒ Yes ☐ No

If no, state reason:

If yes, provide economic impact, costs and benefits as noted below in items a – f.

The codes require pathways from the exterior openings to the public way or sidewalk. This proposed change could increase the size from 3 feet wide to 5 feet wide (at the worst). The distance from the exterior opening to the public way or sidewalk will vary depending upon the lot depth. For this reason, a conservative distance of 100 feet is considered.

- a. **Life Cycle Cost.** Use the OFM Life Cycle Cost [Analysis tool](#) to estimate the life cycle cost of the proposal using one or more typical examples. Reference these [Instructions](#); use these [Inputs](#). Webinars on the tool can be found [Here](#) and [Here](#)). If the tool is used, submit a copy of the excel file with your proposal submission. If preferred, you may submit an alternate life cycle cost analysis.
- b. **Construction Cost.** Provide your best estimate of the construction cost (or cost savings) of your code change proposal.

Concrete walkway 100 feet by 2 feet (5 feet proposed vs. 3 feet normally constructed) equals 200 SF of walkway. Per information obtained from Angie's List website, the total cost of a 200 SF sidewalk would be \$1,600-\$2,400, with an average cost of \$2,000 or \$10,00/SF.

- c. **Code Enforcement.** List any code enforcement time for additional plan review or inspections that your proposal will require, in hours per permit application:

Any plan review or inspections would not be increased by the additional concrete used for the walkway as it would be reviewed and inspected anyways.
- d. **Small Business Impact.** Describe economic impacts to small businesses:

No significant small business impact is projected.

e. ***Housing Affordability.*** Describe economic impacts on housing affordability:

There is a small impact on the development of the wider walkway. It is not a significant cost compared to the full cost of the construction of the building and development of the remainder of the site. It would amount to less than 1% of the total project cost.

f. ***Other.*** Describe other qualitative cost and benefits to owners, to occupants, to the public, to the environment, and to other stakeholders that have not yet been discussed:

The wider walkway would also be good for accessibility to the exterior access points of the building as well as more width for moving in and out of the building.

Please send your completed proposal to: sbcc@des.wa.gov

All questions must be answered to be considered complete. Incomplete proposals will not be accepted.