

Camp Verde Fire Department

26 W. Salt Mine Rd.

P.O. BOX 386 • CAMP VERDE, AZ 86322-0386
BUSINESS 567-9401 • EMERGENCY 567-4123 OR 911

Phillip R. Harbeson Sr.
Fire Chief

Jack E. Blum
Secretary-Treasurer

MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Barbara Rice, 567-9401

For Immediate Release

FIRE CODES, CANYON WOOD SUPPLY AND CAMP VERDE

There is much being said about Canyon Wood Supply and purported non-compliance with zoning, business licensing and fire codes. Recently, claims of “extreme fire danger” and the Fire District “choosing not to enforce even the minimum codes” have appeared in the media. Camp Verde Fire District adopted its first fire code January 2007. In July, a Fire Inspector was hired to carry out the provisions of the code to meet the purpose of the code which “is to establish the minimum requirements consistent with nationally recognized good practice for providing a reasonable level of life safety and property protection from the hazards of fire, explosion or dangerous conditions in new and existing buildings, structures and premises and to provide safety to fire fighters and emergency responders during emergency operations.”

The code allows modifications as long as they meet the intent and purpose of the code. This is a good thing for our community, as the strict letter of the code cannot always be met. For instance, water supply falls far short of the required fire flows. Even though the fire code has been in place by the Town of Camp Verde for many years, a large percentage of our commercial businesses and residential subdivisions are not fire code compliant. Bringing them into compliance is not an instant fix. The purpose of the code is not to close businesses but to make them safe. Imminent fire hazards are dealt with expeditiously and lesser hazards are mitigated over time. The Fire District is performing occupancy inspections to bring all buildings up to a “reasonable level of life safety” as well as reviewing new construction to ensure such code provisions as fire hydrants, apparatus access and fire protection systems are provided and installed correctly.

Chapter 19 of the 2003 International Fire Code has specific regulations for lumberyards and woodworking facilities. Some of the sections do not apply to the Canyon Wood Supply property but some of them do. The most contentious section allows the storage of logs or “cold decks” to be 300 feet wide by 500 feet long and 20 feet high. This also requires separation of 100 feet from property lines and structures. The Fire District is not allowing these size cold decks at this business due to the lack of fire fighting and water resources. We are asking for cold decks approximately ½ to one-third this size. By doing so, we can limit the separation requirements to 50 feet from property lines and structures not owned by the business. There are a few cold decks within this setback and the operators of Canyon Wood Supply are working to move those within the assigned deadline. Additionally, a great deal of waste product clean up has occurred since they purchased the property, reducing the fire hazards that were in existence previously.

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Besides Chapter 19, other portions of the fire code would apply, such as the need for hydrants in the area (including the residential subdivision). This method for providing fire flow is lacking throughout the majority of our district, including our schools (that were under the authority of the State Fire Marshal's office until Fall 2007.)

The District's legal ability to retroactively require the installation of such infrastructure to existing businesses is limited if not disallowed by State statutes. It would also likely mean the elimination of many of our businesses due to the high cost. Camp Verde Fire District's policy does not include selective or preferential code enforcement. Every member of our commercial community will be treated fairly and we will work with them to ensure they are compliant with the fire codes. Every complaint and concern that has been expressed, including those by the neighborhood members around the wood yard, have been taken seriously and dealt with to mitigate fire code violations and hazards. A great deal of effort toward education and explanation of our policy regarding fire code enforcement is shared openly with all. Life safety for our community is a top priority and we do not take it lightly.

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