
AB 835 SINGLE EXIT STAIR WORK GROUP MEETING

Meeting Minutes – Friday, May 9, 2025



Crystal Sujeski, CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal, Chair (Present)
Robert Marshall, Deputy Fire Chief San Mateo, Co-Chair (Present)

Task Group Members

Stoyan Bumbalov, Executive Director, Building Standards Commission
Timothy Omalley (Alternate), Building Standards Commission
Kyle Krause, Deputy Director, Housing Community Development
Mitchel Baker (Alternate), Assistant Deputy Director, Housing Community Development
Stephan Smith, Executive Director, Center for Building in North America (Present)
Jeff Maddox (Alternate), The Fire Consultants (Present)
James Dobson, Fire Marshal, California Fire Chiefs (FM Section) (Present)
James Gillespie Fire Marshal (Alternate), California Fire Chiefs (FM Section)
Joe Cavin, Fire Marshal, California Fire Prevention Officers (Present)
Ian Hardage, Fire Marshal (Alternate), California Fire Prevention Officers
Brian Rice, President, California Professional Firefighters
Melissa McDonald, Executive Assistant (Alternate), California Professional Firefighters
Ed Mendoza, MAP Research Associate, California YIMBY (Present)
Brian Hanlon, CEO (Alternate), California YIMBY
Robert Raymer, Consultant, California Building Industry Association
Christopher Ochoa, Senior Council (Alternate), California Building Industry Association
Ali Fattah, Asst Deputy Director, San Diego, Representing California Building Officials (Present)
Matt Wheeler (Alternate), California Building Officials
Faruk Sezer (Alternate), California Building Officials
Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate, Rural Counties Representatives of California (Present)
Patrick Blacklock (Alternate), Rural Counties Representatives of California
Staci Heaton (Alternate), Rural Counties Representatives of California
Jack Smalley, Legislative Advocate, California State Association of Counties (Present)
Mark Neuburger, Legislative (Alternate), California State Association of Counties
Travis Tyler, Director, California State University (CSU)
Mike Major, (Alternate), California State University (CSU)
Stephen Guarino, Director, University of California (UC)

CAL FIRE Staff

Jena Garcia, CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal (Present)

1. CALL TO ORDER 8:01 AM

- A. Welcome/Introductions
- B. Roll Call/Quorum Established
- C. Agenda Review (Motion Required)

Crystal Sujeski
Crystal Sujeski
Robert Marshall

Motion: Approve (J. Dobson / E. Mendoza) Action: Approved

Motion: Approve (S.Smith / A. Fattah) Action: Approved
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2. OLD BUSINESS

Robert Marshall

- A. NFPA Report- Greg Rogers – Posted in the Single-Exit Stair Work Group section for the April 1 Meeting on the Active Work Groups webpage.
- B. ICC- Christine Reed – Posted in the Single-Exit Stair Work Group section for the April 1 Meeting on the Active Work Groups webpage.
- C. Draft report template
- D. Timeline
 - i. Draft Report Format
 - ii. Template Draft
 - iii. Timeline
 - 1. Draft August 2025
 - 2. 2nd Draft September 2025
 - 3. 3rd Draft October 2025
 - 4. Final November 2025 to present to the State Fire Marshal

3. NEW BUSINESS

Robert Marshall

- A. Subgroups
 - i. Cost Impact [Lead Stephen Smith] stephen@centerforbuilding.org
 - 1. Stair Cost – Estimate 7.5-10% of total cost. ([Cost Report](#))
 - a. Single Stair buildings will have a higher per square foot cost
 - i. Elevator
 - ii. Fascade
 - b. Cost of corridor (Jeff Maddox)
 - c. Returns (change in rents), not just dollar costs; relative to other building types (Ed Mendoza)
 - d. Prototypes, one vs. two stairs for same small building (Ali Fattah)
 - e. Affordable to who? Vacancy chains (filtering), area median income % (Robert Marshall)
 - f. Elevator costs (Crystal Sujeski)
 - g. Exterior stair – costs, problems (James Dobson)
 - ii. Fire Protection (Active/Passive) [Lead Jeff Maddox] jmaddox@thefireconsultants.com
 - 1. Smoke Control – Focused on reliability for use and FD operations.
 - a. Stairway Opening are maintained. Use of electronic mg hold opens to reduce door propping.
 - b. Prohibit electrical receptacles to prevent the storage and charging of e-mobility devices in the stairway.
 - c. Require a 4 square foot smoke vent shaft to relive smoke pressure out the corridor (if any corridor is provided)

- d. Exterior stair or stair with enough exterior opening to vent smoke.
 - 2. Fire Alarm
 - a. R-2 Building – Keep standard code requirements for R-2.
 - i. Should we take away the exception to remove manual pulls. (R Marshall)
 - b. Stairway – Electronic hold open devices
 - c. Voice Notification – Common Space
 - d. Smoke detection vs. Smoke alarms
 - 3. Sprinkler System
 - a. R-2 Building – fully sprinklered (13 or 13R as permitted)
 - i. Stairs open to units on multi level should require sprinklers on all levels. (R Marshall)
 - b. Secondary Water Supply – Tank/street Connection are not necessary but there was discussion of requiring a second redundant riser.
 - c. In California, sprinklers are mandatory
 - i. What about repurposing of non-sprinklered buildings?
 - ii. ADUs are currently not required by law
 - 4. Types of Construction/Building Height
 - a. Single Exit Stair building up to 4-7 stories, but below the high-rise threshold.
 - i. Concern with earthquake damage impacts to single stair reliability.
 - 5. Rescue Windows – Determined to be outside the sub work group realm. But we recommend the Work Group research.
- iii. Code Comparison **[Lead Ali Fattah]** AFattah@sandiego.gov
 - 1. What are other states/larger/small cities doing?
 - a. Key Variables
 - i. Number of stories 4, 6, high-rise
 - ii. Number of dwelling units per story
 - iii. Allowable building area per story
 - iv. Direct access to a stairways or through the intermediate corridor
 - v. Emergency escape and rescue opening are required/fronting in a public way.
 - vi. NFPA 13 fire sprinkler system
 - vii. Non-combustible constriction
 - viii. Smoke-proof exit enclosure
 - ix. Pressurization of elevator hoist ways
 - b. Not Addressed
 - i. Maximum height in feet
 - ii. Local condition modifiers due to seismic, flood, winds
 - iii. Responding fire department capabilities
 - iv. Increase protection of the unit allow self-preservation in the event of delayed response and loss of single exit.
 - v. Increase stairway width
 - vi. Two-way communication

- c. Conclusion
 - i. Focus on US jurisdictions due to variability in codes, firefighting capabilities, and tactics.
 - ii. Commonality of number of units per story, the type of fire sprinkler system required, and the number of sorties minimum 4 to maximum of 6.
 - iii. None allow high-rise
 - iv. Rely on base code for type of construction, fire alarm, means of egress requirements.
 - v. Code Matrix developed – overview report
- iv. History / Baseline (US) [Lead Stephen Smith] stephen@centerforbuilding.org (No Report)
- v. Egress Analysis [Lead Tim Spears] tim.spears@sjcfire.org (No Report)
- vi. FD Capabilities [Lead James Dobson] james.dobson@sanjoseca.gov
 - 1. Firefighting Capabilities –
 - a. Creating Survey to collect data – Firefighting capabilities (Firefighter access, firefighting tactics, and Fire Equipment needs (aerial apparatus).
 - b. Spoke to Cal Chiefs
 - c. Firefighting operations impacts on single exit stair and having appropriate width so not to impede exiting of occupants.
 - d. Rescue windows – Concern that secondary means of egress needed due to firefighting impediments and location of rescue windows limitations.
 - e. Some Fire Depts firefighting tactics align with high-rise at 4 stories.
 - 2. Recruiting additional members to join this sub-workgroup.
 - a. Chief Sujeski
 - i. Chief Berlant for further outreach to Cal Chiefs leadership.
 - ii. Cal Stats – Mike Morlan can be a reference for statistical data for items that may be relevant such as incidents or injuries.

4. ROUNDTABLE

Robert Marshall

- A. Jeff Maddox - Did the Egress group meet?
 - i. R. Marshall - Probably not, since the lead, Tim Spears has taken another position
- B. E. Mendoza – Have we considered removing/prohibiting trash rooms?
 - i. Ali Fattah – I don't recall these buildings having trash rooms due to size. No necessary against trash rooms as they provide a place for proper disposal of trash.

- ii. S. Smith – Supports no trash room, would encourage trash to be removed from building a placed curbside for pickup.
- C. R Marshall – Elected to be added to the FD capabilities sub-work group.
- D. Ali Fattah- Building Code Comparison – Next step should include researching the ICC proposals to identify if CA should be more restrictive or less based on what is being approved.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Robert Marshall

- A. None

6. UPCOMING MEETING DATE FOR 2024

Crystal Sujeski

- A. The first Tuesday of each month starts at 8 AM and ends at 10 AM (unless voted on by the members for a better meeting time).
 - i. Next Meeting – June 3, 2025, 8-10 AM PDT

7. MEETING ADJOURNED (Motion Required) 12 PM

Crystal Sujeski

Motion: Approve (Dobson / Smith)	Action: Approved
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If you would like to watch the recording of this meeting, please visit the link below:
<https://youtu.be/p0Swag4LqIA>