



## **WOOD ROOF REPLACEMENT ORDINANCE: COMMUNITY MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

During a recent community meeting with residents, many questions surrounding buildings with wood roofs were raised. This is intended to provide answers to some of the most common questions asked by property owners that have buildings with wood roof coverings. If you have a question that is not asked and answered below, please contact Building and Safety at (310) 285-1141, or submit your question to AskBev at <https://clients.comcate.com/newrequest.php?id=31>.

### **ROOFING PRODUCTS AND MATERIALS THAT REDUCE FIRE HAZARD**

**Q:** What is a Class-A roof assembly and when is it required?

**A:** The Class A, B, and C rating system for roofs is a method to differentiate the flame spread resistance of roof assemblies based on ASTM E108, "Test Methods for Fire Tests of Roof Coverings." Class A rated roofs will resist flame spread under severe fire exposure and afford a high degree of fire protection to the roof deck. Class A roofs may be used in all types of construction. Class A roofs include the following materials: brick, slate, concrete roof tiles, ferrous shingles, ferrous sheet material, masonry, clay roof tiles, exposed concrete roof deck, copper shingles, and copper sheet material.

There are two ways for a roof to have a Class A fire rating. The first is from the covering alone, sometimes called a "stand alone" Class A roof. The second way is for the covering and underlying materials to be Class A, designating the roof as Class A "by assembly". The City of Beverly Hills requires that all new roof coverings or roof assemblies on any structure be a fire-retardant non-wood roof covering or non-wood roof assembly that is listed as a Class A assembly by July 1, 2013.

**Q:** Is there a fire retardant spray-on material that can be used as an alternative to replacing a wood roof?

**A:** There are fire retardant spray materials that can bolster the fire resistance of a wood roof. However, no spray-on application has passed standard tests recognized by the fire and building code industries to meet Class A standards. As such, at this time, no fire retardant spray-on material may be used in lieu of replacing your wood roof in compliance with the City's Wood Roof Ordinance.

**Q:** Is a wood roof that is pressure treated just as safe as a Class-A roof?



**A:** A wood roof that has been pressure treated with the appropriate chemicals is demonstrated to be more fire resistant than a wood roof that has not been pressure treated. However, this pressure treatment does not make a roof Class A fire resistant. As such, pressure treating a wood roof is not an appropriate alternative to replacement as a way to comply with the Wood Roof Ordinance.

**Q:** Is there a product that will resist fires and make a non-compliant wood roof safer?

**A:** There is no proven method that meets the Class A standard of fire resistance other than replacement. As such, there is no product that is an acceptable alternative to replacing a wood roof in accordance with the Wood Roof Ordinance.

**Q:** How do you know if you have a Class-A wood roof?

**A:** A licensed contractor or specialty consultant will be able to determine whether you have a Class-A wood roof or roof assembly which meets the Wood Roof Ordinance requirements. Also, the City will have permit records indicating when a roof was replaced and what materials were used.

**Q:** Is there a way to test your roof to see if it meets ordinance requirements?

**A:** A licensed contractor or specialty consultant will be able to determine whether you have a Class-A wood roof or roof assembly which meets the Wood Roof Ordinance requirements. Also, the City will have permit records indicating when a roof was replaced and what materials were used.

### **EVIDENCE THAT FIRES ARE CAUSED OR SPREAD BY WOOD ROOFS IN BEVERLY HILLS**

**Q:** What evidence is there that embers from a fire can blow 1-2 miles across the City and land on a wood roof and start a fire?

**A:** There is well documented history of brush fires blowing 1-2 miles across land causing severe damage to property and individuals. In 1961 there was a brush fire in Bel-Air that destroyed 481 homes. In 1970 and 1993 there was a brush fire in Laguna Beach that destroyed 382 homes and caused 8 deaths. In 1990 the Painted Cave brush fire in Santa Barbara destroyed over 500 homes. In 1991, the brush fire in Oakland Hills destroyed 3,354 homes, 438 apartments and caused 25 deaths. The 2003 "Old Fire" brush fire in San Bernardino destroyed 993 homes and caused 6 deaths. The 2003 "Cedar Fire" in San Diego County burned 2,232 homes and resulted in 15 deaths. And in 2007, three homes in Beverly Hills were destroyed as a result of the City of Los Angeles Franklin Canyon fire, which resulted in \$13,000,000.00 of property damage.

**Q:** Have any homes south of Sunset Boulevard with wood roofs burned, that have caused another home to catch fire, resulting from flying embers in the last 30 years?

**A:** There is currently no data or information available in the National Fire Incident Reporting database.



**Q:** Has the City experienced any brush fires that were caused by a burning wood roof since the wood roof replacement ordinance was adopted?

**A:** Typically, roof fires do not spark brush fires. Conversely, brush fires produce embers that can ignite wood roofs, which in turn can produce embers that will cause further spread of the fire.

**Q:** How many properties south of Sunset Boulevard have burned resulting from a fire caused by a burning wood roof in the last 30 years?

**A:** There is currently no data or information available in the National Fire Incident Reporting database.

**Q:** How many fires have occurred in the City of Beverly Hills that spread to another building, which was directly attributed to the cause of a wood roof?

**A:** There is currently no data or information available in the National Fire Incident Reporting database. However, the only buildings that caught fire within Beverly Hills during the 2007 Franklin Fire had combustible wood roofs.

**Q:** Is dead vegetation around a building more of a threat of fire than a wood roof?

**A:** Dead vegetation is more easily ignited; however, they both produce flying embers and pose an equal threat to neighboring properties. The Fire Department aggressively inspects and enforces brush clearance in the City of Beverly Hills.

**Q:** Does the City of Beverly Hills impose brush clearance requirements around buildings to prevent fires?

**A:** Yes, it is the primary intent of the ordinance to protect structures from vegetation fires. Another main component is to provide a defensible space around the structure.

**Q:** Is there any statistical evidence of the number of Class-A wood roofs that burned in the City of Beverly Hills since 2007?

**A:** There is currently no data or information available in the National Fire Incident Reporting database.

**Q:** Does a Class-A roof mean that it won't burn and catch fire?

**A:** No, the designation of a roof as Class A does not mean that it will not burn in a fire. A Class A wood roof will burn if exposed to flames longer than the Class A test threshold. Additionally, a Class



A wood roof may still produce flying embers. As such, the amended ordinance only allows non-combustible roofing materials.

## **STATISTICAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF WOOD ROOFS IN THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS**

**Q:** How many single family residences are there in the City of Beverly Hills?

**A:** Based on the 2007 Census Data, there are currently 5,983 single family residents in the City of Beverly Hills.

**Q:** How many single family residences in the City of Beverly Hills have wood roofs?

**A:** There are currently 391 (combined non-compliant wood and Class A Wood Roof Assembly wood roof coverings) properties identified as having wood roofs in the City of Beverly Hills.

**Q:** How many non-conforming wood roofs exist in the City of Beverly Hills?

**A:** There are approximately 215 buildings located throughout the City of Beverly Hills that have non-conforming wood roofs. Statistically, the non-conforming wood roofs are geographically located in the City defined areas as follows:

- Hillside (High Fire Hazard Severity Zone generally defined north of Sunset Blvd.) = 58 Properties
- Central (south of Sunset Blvd. and north of Santa Monica Blvd.) = 110 Properties
- Central (south of Santa Monica Blvd.) = 47 Properties

**Q:** Who should I contact in order to verify if my building has a permitted Class-A Wood Roof Assembly?

**A:** You may contact our designated roof staff member at Building and Safety by dialing (310) 285-1159 to determine if a permitted compliant roof has been installed on your structure.

**Q:** Do I need to replace my roof if it is verified to be a Class-A Wood Roof Assembly?

**A:** No, you do not need to replace your wood roof if it is verified to be a permitted Class-A Wood Roof assembly.

**Q:** Who should I contact at the City if my roof is verified to be a Class-A Wood Roof Assembly?

**A:** You may contact our designated roof staff member at Building and Safety by dialing (310) 285-1159 to submit your information.

**Q:** Can I make repairs to my existing non-compliant wood roof?



**A:** Yes. Currently, you may make repairs less than 10 percent of the total roof area on existing structures in any one year period with a roof covering that meets the same fire retardant standard as the existing roof.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF THE WOOD ROOF REPLACEMENT ORDINANCE**

**Q:** What are the consequences for failure to comply with the wood roof ordinance?

**A:** It is always the City's goal to gain voluntary compliance. However, like any other Municipal Code Violation, failure to comply may result in citations issued by the City.

### **INFORMATION ON WOOD ROOFS**

**Q:** Is the Wood Roof Ordinance available on the City of Beverly Hills website?

**A:** Yes. The Wood Roof Ordinance can be found at:  
<http://www.beverlyhills.org/business/constructionlanduse/woodroofordinance/>

**Q:** Does the City have suggestions for materials that comply with the Wood Roof Ordinance?

**A:** The only suggestion is that the roof covering appropriately matches the architectural style of the building. The Wood Roof Ordinance requires that all roof coverings be Class A Non-Wood. There is a huge variety of roofing products that are non-wood and meet the Class A standards.

**Q:** Is the City of Beverly Hills considering alternatives or options to extend the Wood Roof Replacement compliance date of July 1, 2013 for some properties?

**A:** Yes. Alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are being reviewed and considered.

**Q:** Does the City of Beverly Hills have a grandfather clause that would exempt properties with non-compliant wood roofs installed before the ordinance went into effect?

**A:** No

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills allow any wood roofs to be maintained?

**A:** Yes. Permitted Class A wood roofs can remain. Furthermore, Listed Historic Structures may install rated wood roofs pursuant to the State Historic Building Code.

**Q:** Why are some wood roofs allowed to be maintained and not others?



**A:** The wood roof ordinance allows Class A wood roof assembly coverings that were legally permitted to remain until replaced. Additionally, the 2010 California Historical Code allows historically designated buildings to maintain wood roof coverings under defined criteria. Historic structures are considered a community asset and receive unique privileges under the law.

**Q:** What is the criterion to allow an existing non-rated wood roof to remain and be maintained?

**A:** Alternatives and options to the existing Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are being reviewed.

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills establish different compliance requirements for buildings with wood roofs in the High Fire Hazard Severity Zone versus buildings located in the Non-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone areas of the City?

**A:** Alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are being considered.

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills allow a fire retardant spray be applied for protection on roofs outside the High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (generally south of Sunset Blvd.), rather than replacing these roofs with a non-wood roof covering material?

**A:** Alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are currently being considered.

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills allow property owners to comply with the non-wood roof covering replacement upon time of sale, transfer or change of title of a property?

**A:** Alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are currently being reviewed and considered.

**Q:** Why didn't the City inform residents of the compliance date sooner than a year before the date of compliance?

**A:** The Wood Roof Ordinance has been in effect since 1989, and the date of compliance has been set since 1993. Since the Franklin Canyon Fire in 2007, the City has made a number of efforts to inform the community of the danger of maintaining a combustible wood roof and the approaching compliance deadline. This most recent effort to inform the community began in January of 2012, eighteen months before the July 1, 2013 deadline.

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills allow property owners that have non-compliant wood roofs to install fire sprinklers on their roofs in lieu of replacing roofs to expend their remaining useful life expectancy?

**A:** The installation of a rooftop sprinkler system in lieu of installing a Class A roof covering does not provide equivalent fire protection, and cannot be installed as there is currently not any recognized



certifiable fire sprinkler system for the purpose of providing equivalent protection of a Class A roof covering.

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills consider extending the July 1, 2013 wood roof replacement ordinance compliance date by 2-10 years?

**A:** Alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are currently being reviewed and considered.

**Q:** Has the City of Beverly Hills considered helping residents defray the economic impact of having to replace their non-compliant wood roofs?

**A:** Yes. The City is investigating and reviewing the availability grant funding that some property owners may qualify for based on economic need.

**Q:** Has the City of Beverly Hills considered compensating homeowners for relocation expenses while they vacate their home for 2-3 weeks during roof replacement?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Has the City of Beverly Hills considered reimbursing residents for the replacement costs associated with roof replacement?

**A:** The City is investigating and reviewing the availability grant funding that some property owners may qualify for based on economic need.

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills consider an extension to homeowners looking to add a second story after the deadline period in order to avoid unnecessary re-roofing costs?

**A:** Yes. As long as the homeowner has submitted renovation plans which show a roof replacement by July 1, 2013. In these instances, the homeowner may be allowed to postpone compliance.

**Q:** Will the City Council take into consideration that a "one size fits all" (High Fire Zone vs. Flats) ordinance does not work in the city?

**A:** Alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are currently being reviewed and considered.

## **WOOD ROOF ORDINANCE DESIGN REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

**Q:** Are buildings with non-conforming wood roofs subject to Design Review approval?

**A:** Yes, in some cases. Design Review in the Central Area of the City is required and the City's Urban Designer will review these projects over the counter when permits are being applied for.



**Q:** Are all properties within the City of Beverly Hills subject to Design Review approval?

**A:** No. Only homes in the City's Central Area are subject to Design Review. However, if a property has the potential to be a historic building, the Community Development Department will likely review any alterations to the home to ensure that no character-defining qualities are being altered.

### **WOOD ROOF REPLACEMENT ORDINANCE AND REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS**

**Q:** Will the City of Beverly Hills be lenient with property owners who purchased a home with a non-compliant wood roof that was not disclosed to them?

**A:** The ordinance does not make any distinction. However, alternatives and options to the Wood Roof Replacement Ordinance are currently being reviewed and considered.

**Q:** Are real estate professionals who sell properties in the City of Beverly Hills sufficiently educated on the subject of the wood roof replacement Ordinance?

**A:** The City's outreach efforts to educate the community about the Wood Roof Ordinance include Real Estate professionals. Furthermore, this information is available on the City's website and accessible to anyone who is interested in learning more about the ordinance.

**Q:** If a buyer intends to demolish the home that has a non-compliant wood roof after it's sold, are they still required to comply with the City of Beverly Hills wood roof replacement Ordinance?

**A:** The demolition of the home must be completed by the compliance deadline, or the plan check for the planned demolition must be in progress by the compliance deadline.

**Q:** What action is the City of Beverly Hills taking with real estate professional who are sending brochures to homeowners that encourage them to sell their properties in order to avoid re-roofing costs?

**A:** Real estate professionals are discouraged from handing out literature that would encourage property owners to sell their homes in order to avoid non-compliant roof replacement, or any other literature that would potentially harm the resale value of homes in the City. Real estate professionals representing both sellers and buyers should fully disclose the City's ordinance that requires replacement of non-compliant wood roofs by July 1, 2013.

**Q:** Is the City of Beverly Hills concerned that the wood roof replacement ordinance has lowered the sale price of properties with non-compliant wood roofs?

**A:** There are many variables that affect the value of a property including its overall condition, size, location and comparables. An appraiser will always assess the condition of a roof based on its age and condition. It is likely an appraiser will make note of any 24+ year old wood roof regardless of any local ordinance.



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS  
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