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HOUSE BILL NO. 944

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 12, 2016

A BILL to amend and reenact § 27-97 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Statewide Fire Prevention Code; installation or use of landscape cover materials.

 Patron—Wilt

 Referred to Committee on General Laws

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 27-97 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 27-97. Adoption of Fire Prevention Code.**

A. The Board of Housing and Community Development is hereby empowered to adopt and promulgate a Statewide Fire Prevention Code which shall be cooperatively developed with the Fire Services Board pursuant to procedures agreed to by the two Boards. The Fire Prevention Code shall prescribe regulations to be complied with for the protection of life and property from the hazards of fire or explosion and for the handling, storage, sale and use of fireworks, explosives or blasting agents, and shall provide for the administration and enforcement of such regulations. The Fire Prevention Code shall require manufacturers of fireworks or explosives, as defined in the Code, to register and report information concerning their manufacturing facilities and methods of operation within the Commonwealth in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board. In addition to conducting criminal background checks pursuant to § 27-97.2, the Board shall also establish regulations for obtaining permits for the manufacturing, storage, handling, use, or sales of fireworks or explosives. In the enforcement of such regulations, the enforcing agency may issue annual permits for such activities to any state regulated public utility. Such permits shall not apply to the storage, handling, or use of explosives or blasting agents pursuant to the provisions of Title 45.1.

The Fire Prevention Code shall prohibit any person, firm, or corporation from transporting, manufacturing, storing, selling, offering for sale, exposing for sale, or buying, using, igniting, or exploding any fireworks except for those persons, firms, or corporations that manufacture, store, market and distribute fireworks for the sole purpose of fireworks displays permitted by an enforcement agency or by any locality.

B. The Fire Prevention Code shall supersede fire prevention regulations heretofore adopted by local governments or other political subdivisions. Local governments are hereby empowered to adopt fire prevention regulations that are more restrictive or more extensive in scope than the Fire Prevention Code provided such regulations do not affect the manner of construction, or materials to be used in the erection, alteration, repair, or use of a building or structure, including the voluntary installation of smoke alarms and regulation and inspections thereof in commercial buildings where such smoke alarms are not required under the provisions of the Code. *For the purposes of this subsection, local government regulation of the installation or use of landscape cover materials shall be deemed to affect the manner of construction or materials to be used in the erection, alteration, repair, or use of a building or structure and shall not be permitted.*

C. The Fire Prevention Code shall prohibit any person not certified by the State Fire Marshal's Office as a fireworks operator or pyrotechnician to design, set up, or conduct or supervise the design, setup, or conducting of any fireworks display, either inside a building or structure or outdoors and shall require that at least one person holding a valid certification is present at the site where the fireworks display is being conducted. Certification shall not be required for the design, storage, sale, use, conduct, transportation, and set up of permissible fireworks or the supervision thereof or in connection with any fireworks display conducted by a volunteer fire department provided one member of the volunteer fire department holds a valid certification.

D. In formulating the Fire Prevention Code, the Board shall have due regard for generally accepted standards as recommended by nationally recognized organizations including, but not limited to, standards of the International Code Council, the National Fire Protection Association, and recognized organizations issuing standards for the protection of the public from the hazards of explosives and blasting agents. Such standards shall be based on the companion document to the model building code referenced by the Uniform Statewide Building Code.

E. The Fire Prevention Code shall require that buildings constructed prior to 1973 be maintained in accordance with state fire and public building regulations in effect prior to March 31, 1986, and that any building which is (i) more than 75 feet or more than six stories high and (ii) used, in whole or in part,

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HB944

59 as a dormitory to house students by any public or private institution of higher education shall be
60 required to comply with the provisions of § 36-99.3.

61 *F.* The Fire Prevention Code shall also require annual fire drills in all buildings having floors used
62 for human occupancy located more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access.
63 The drills shall be conducted by building staff personnel or the owner of the building in accordance
64 with a plan approved by the appropriate fire official and shall not affect other current occupants.

65 *G.* The Board may modify, amend or repeal any Code provisions as the public interest requires. Any
66 such Code changes shall be developed in cooperation with the Fire Services Board pursuant to
67 procedures agreed to by the two Boards.