PURPOSE

To establish consistent guidelines and procedures by which cellular facilities will meet minimal applicable fire prevention measures without the need to have the permit application sent to the local Fire Authority Having Jurisdiction (FAHJ) for review and approval (this includes the need to obtain a Fire Service Availability Form). This policy will be used by the Department of Planning and Land Use Regulatory Division and Building Division and all fire districts within the unincorporated area with the exception of those agencies listed on page 3 of this policy document.

BACKGROUND

Cellular facilities are being proposed throughout the County and are constructed as a stand-alone facility along freeways and mountaintops or within existing/new buildings. The components of most cellular sites include a monopole antenna, all-weather equipment cabinet for the cellular equipment and battery backup system and perimeter fence to secure the equipment and site. Typically, cellular facilities do not constitute a life or fire hazard.

Because of the low threat to life/safety coupled with the increasing number of permit applications being submitted for cellular facilities, a policy is needed in order to expedite project submittals for cellular facilities while providing consistent fire safety measures county-wide. Such fire prevention requirements are needed to make sure cellular sites are self-protecting, with no fire agency emergency response anticipated, especially in major wildland incidents.

POLICY

To be consistent in the application and fire prevention measures for cellular facilities, the majority of fire districts have agreed to one applied standard. If all the Fire Prevention Standards are met as defined below, then the cellular facility permit application shall not require formal review by the FAHJ. If the standards cannot be met, or if there are requests for considerations other than noted herein, the applicant will be directed to the proper FAHJ for review and a Fire Service Availability letter (discretionary projects) will be completed.

FIRE PREVENTION STANDARD

This standard applies to both single use sites (one cellular facility only) as well as to shared-use sites (multiple transmitters on same site), so long as the building structure size is less than 300 square feet. The policy does **not** apply when the cellular site is located within an existing building (e.g. church, industrial building, etc.) or proposes onsite fuel storage. This type of location (within an existing building) would require specific review by the FAHJ or County Fire Marshal/ Fire Services Coordinator for areas outside fire districts.

1. **ACCESS**: Roadways installed and maintained by the cellular company solely for maintenance of their equipment shall be deemed adequate for fire prevention inspection.

2. **GATES & BARRIERS**: Gates or other barriers across cell site access roads which also serve as fire access roadways shall provide a rapid reliable access by means of a key box so as to provide immediate access for life safety or firefighting purposes. The key box shall be located in an accessible location. The location must be approved by the FAHJ, and the key box must be ordered through the local FAHJ. (Note: keys are different for different fire agencies throughout the County.) Gates or other barriers across cell site access roads that do not also serve as fire access roads are unregulated by this policy.

3. **CONSTRUCTION – STRUCTURE PROPOSED**: Cellular facilities that propose structures to enclose cellular cabinets and equipment must meet the following requirements.

    a. Exterior walls must be non-combustible. (Examples: masonry, 2-hour rated steel, etc.).

    b. Eaves must be enclosed with fire-resistive material (examples: stucco, cement-fiber board).

    c. Roofs must be class "A" assemblies with edge protection.

    d. Openings must be protected with fire-rated assemblies.

4. **CONSTRUCTION – STRUCTURE NOT PROPOSED**: Cellular facilities that do not propose to enclose the cellular cabinets and equipment with a structure must meet the following requirements:

    a. A 12" masonry block wall must be installed around all sides of the facility facing combustible vegetation to prevent ignition of said vegetation.

5. **FUEL MODIFICATION**: Cellular facilities that cannot be self-protected as outlined in #3 or #4 above must maintain a minimum 30 foot of fuel modification on all sides of the cellular facility or as required under the County's Combustible Vegetation and Other Flammable Materials Ordinance.

6. **FACILITY STANDBY POWER**: Emergency power or uninterrupted power supplies shall be accordance with Article 64, Stationary Lead-Acid Battery Systems of the California Fire Code. Sign(s) must be posted as required in California Fire Code section 6404.7

7. **FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM**: The local FAHJ (or County Fire Marshal in "Unserved" and CSA areas) shall approve, prior to installation or modification, any Fire Protection Systems and Equipment.

8. **FIRE RADIO INTERFERENCE:** Interference with fire department radio communication from cellular sites shall be corrected immediately by the applicant.

NOTE: The following Fire Protection Districts have elected not to participate in this policy:

- North County Fire Protection District
- Rincon Del Diablo (Escondido) MWD
- San Marcos Fire Protection District
- Vista Fire Protection District

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