Rebuilding After the Fire; Frequently Asked Questions

1. When a home is rebuilt, must it be built in compliance with current building codes?
Yes. The structure must be constructed according to current State Building Codes. The State Code in effect now is the 2013 California Residential Code, which applies to one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures.

2. Can a house be built on an existing foundation?
Those who wish to use an existing foundation from a home destroyed by fire will need to have the foundation analyzed by a California licensed civil or structural engineer as required by California Building Code (CBC) Section 3405. This analysis needs to include a statement that the engineer visited the site and investigated the condition of the existing building elements. In order for the existing foundation to be used, the engineer needs to be able to state in the report that the remaining foundation is suitable for the support of the new structure, and that all under-slab utility systems (such as drain, waste, vent, water, mechanical, electrical, etc.) are suitable for continued use.

3. How is Lake County determining the square footage of structures that were on my property prior to the fire?
County staff will rely on any and all available information from prior building permit records on file with the Community Development Department job, and when necessary assessment records from the Lake County Assessor’s Office. In situations where County permit records are incomplete due to the house predating permit requirements, the County can consider the square footages from formal documents, such as insurance papers.

4. Is a Demolition Permit required for removal of a building or portions of a building that were damaged or destroyed by a fire?
No, provided that a RIGHT OF ENTRY PERMIT has been submitted and your property is on the list for cleanup by CalOES and CalEPA. If you chose to opt out of the free cleanings, and remove the debris yourself or through your contractor, a demolition permit is required pursuant to State Code (2013
California Residential Code, Section R105.1). CAL OSHA Standards for handling and disposal of the debris still apply. Demolition permits for residences are issued over-the-counter, without delay.

5. **Is a Building Permit required to repair damage to a structure?**
   Yes. A Permit is required for repairs and construction pursuant to State Code (2013 California Residential Code, Section R105.1). Review of repair permit applications will be expedited and Building Inspectors are available to inspect your structure before you file a building permit to assist in damage assessment and provide information of Building Code requirements applicable to the situation at hand. Some situations may necessitate that a Registered Engineer evaluate the condition of the damaged home and provide engineered plans for the repair.

6. **How long do I have to rebuild my permanent residence?**
   There is no timeline on when you have to start rebuilding your home provided that your property is zoned residential or agriculture. If your home was located on a commercial zoned parcel, it was considered legal non-conforming and in these situations you will need to file the building permit application within two (2) years.
   Once a building permit is issued, an inspection is needed a minimum of every 180 days (6 months) in order to keep the permit from expiring. Upon each inspection the permit will automatically be extended for an additional 180 days and this process repeats itself until structure is completed and the permit finaled. Please keep in mind that each inspection needs to indicate that consistent progress toward completion is being made. A one-time 6-month extension can be granted by the Building Official for hardship situations. However, we encourage property owners to complete construction as quickly as practical and not wait to the last minute to call for the next inspection. Because California updates its Building Codes every couple of years, expired permits can result in hidden complications when you have to re-apply for a permit to finish a partially constructed home.

7. **What documents are needed for a Building Permit submittal?**
   All required plans and documents required for a rebuild permit are identified on our Building Permit handout available at our counter. The Building Permit Application Form can be found on our website [http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Community_Development.htm](http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Community_Development.htm). We will need 2 copies each of the Site Plan, Construction Documents, and Fire Suppressant System – stamped by your Local Fire District. A complete submittal and detailed building plans often translate into quicker review times. The site plan needs to be drawn to scale and include all improvements, as multiple departments and agencies will need it for their reviews that must be completed prior to permit issuance.
8. Once I have all building permit submittal documents ready, how do I submit them?
Applications need to be filed at the Community Development Department office at 255 North Forbes Street (3rd floor of Courthouse). Our normal business hours for permit application submittals and permit issuance are 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. We are in the preliminary planning stages of developing a temporary permit center in either Middletown or Hidden Valley to better serve your permit needs, so please check in with us before making the drive to Lakeport to submit your plans.

9. What other agencies might be involved in the Building Permit Process?
Department of Public Works – Encroachment/Road Impact fees; Environmental Health – septic/well systems; Special Districts – Water/Sewer; Cal-Fire – Wildfire Protection Areas; Local School District and Local Fire District – Mitigation fees.

10. Are residential fire sprinklers required in reconstructed building that were destroyed in the fire?
Yes. Residential fire sprinkler systems are required as mandated by the 2013 California Residential Code Section R313.

11. Who can assist with the plan preparation and installation of residential fire sprinklers?
There are various designers and contractors who can perform these services. Please contact Building Division staff for designer and contractor information.

12. Do I need a licensed fire protection contractor to design and install the sprinkler system?
A homeowner can install the sprinkler system themselves. However, a fire sprinkler designer is required to design the system and prepare plans that will need to be signed off by the local Fire District. A licensed C-16 fire protection contractor can prepare plans and do the installation, but may require their client to use them for both the plans and installation.

13. What types of residential fire sprinkler systems are available?
There are two (2) different types of sprinkler systems to select: An anti-freeze system, and a multi-purpose system. The anti-freeze system is the type that is isolated form the rest of the building’s domestic plumbing, and provides freeze protection such that heat need not be maintained in the building. The multi-
purpose system is a non-anti-freeze system connected to the building’s domestic plumbing and serves sprinkler heads similar to other plumbing fixtures. The multi-purpose system is generally less expensive than the anti-freeze system, and is suitable for primary home owners.