



## STANDARD 518 ALTERNATE MATERIALS AND METHODS

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**Supersedes:** VCFPD Standard 14.4.4

### CHAPTER 1 – ADMINISTRATION

**1.1 Purpose.** This standard applies to the direction for submitting requests for use of Alternate Materials and Methods (AMM) per the Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC).

**1.2 Scope.** When a project is unable to meet requirements or standards of applicable codes and ordinances related to fire and life safety, it is possible to propose the use of alternate materials and methods of protection, as provided in the VCFC. The use of and AMM shall be approved by the Fire Chief or the person designated by the Chief.

#### **1.3 Applicability.**

**1.3.1 General.** It is most common that these types of requests occur during construction, after permits have been issued. However, in the event that a "Alternate Materials and Method Request" form is submitted during the design stages, prior to accepting plans and issuing permits, the final "accepted" request should be included with the permit drawings, either by reference or by copy directly onto the plans, depending on the actual timeframe.

**1.3.2 Applicant.** The applicant must completely fill out an Alternate Materials and Methods Request form (Form 616). The applicant shall be the Design Professional (i.e. architect, engineer, etc.), the owner, a lessee, or a duly authorized representative as required by the Fire District.

**1.3.3 Fire Marshal.** The Fire Marshal shall hold the authority to make the final decision regarding a request for alternate materials or methods. The Fire Marshal, at his/her discretion, may decide that the item be reviewed at a higher level with the Fire Marshal, the Fire Chief and/or the Director of Building and Safety before making a final decision.

**1.3.4 Fire District Appeals Board.** If a request has been denied, the applicant has the right to request a hearing before the Fire District Appeals Board. The applicant shall notify the Fire Marshal of the request to have a hearing within 30 days of the date of decision. Appeals should be based on questions of code interpretation or determination of equivalent protection/alternate methods. See the current Fire District Fee Schedule for fees associated with the Fire District Appeals Board.

## CHAPTER 2 – DEFINITIONS

**Fire Code Official.** The fire chief or other designated authority charged with the administration and enforcement of the code, or a duly authorized representative.

**Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC).** The current edition of the Ventura County Fire Protection District ordinance adopted as part of the State of California’s triennial code cycle and consisting in part of the current adopted edition of the California Fire Code; portions of the current adopted edition of the International Fire Code; and the Fire District’s amendments thereto.

## CHAPTER 3 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

**3.1 General.** Requests for AMM’s shall be submitted to the Fire Prevention Bureau as indicated elsewhere in this document.

**3.1.1** Obtain approval from the appropriate **Building and Safety Department** for alternate materials and methods when required by the Fire District.

**3.2 Specifications of Submittal.** At the time of submit for an AMM the applicant shall provide all supporting data, technical reports, product data sheets, drawings, sketches, computer modeling, calculations, etc. that substantiate and justify the request.

**3.2.1** The information provided shall be “project specific”. The fact that an AMM was approved for one project does not guarantee its acceptance for all projects. Each submittal shall be evaluated on the conditions and merits of the request for the specific project.

**3.3 Submittal Requirements.** Submit all supporting data that substantiates and justifies the request, Alternate Materials and Methods Request form (Form 616), and the appropriate fees to the Fire Prevention Bureau located at 165 Durley Avenue, Camarillo, CA 93010.

**3.4 Fees.** Appropriate fees can be found at [www.vcfd.org](http://www.vcfd.org) under the Fire Prevention menu tab. Fees can be paid by check/money order or credit card. Fees include only the original review of the AMM. Please ensure that all supporting data is submitted for review to avoid additional fees. All fees shall be paid at the time of submittal.

**3.5 Record Number.** The Fire District has instituted the use of a “Record Number” for tracking all projects submitted for review. To provide faster customer service, please refer to your Record Number when contacting the Fire District.

## CHAPTER 4 – SUBMITTAL SPECIFICATIONS

**4.1 General.** To determine if the proposed AMM is sufficient, the applicant shall provide the information indicated below, in writing, with those plans necessary to evaluate the project. An AMM is

**not** a waiver to relieve a project from compliance with code requirements. It must offer an alternative that is equivalent to or better than the standard code in terms of quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability or safety.

**4.2 Size and Scale.** Plans shall be drawn on a minimum 24" x 36" paper and shall be drawn to an indicated scale.

**4.3 Specifications.** The following items shall be included in all request for AMM.

- (1) Scope of work for the project.
- (2) Name of owner and/or occupant.
- (3) Location of project, including parcel #, street, number and city.
- (4) Applicable codes and standards used for the design.
- (5) Conditions that necessitate the AMM request and why compliance with the standard requirements is not possible, feasible, or desirable.
- (6) The code requirement(s), the proposed alternate(s) and justification for the request.
- (7) All applicable plans.
- (8) All supporting data, technical reports, product data sheets, drawings, sketches, computer modeling, calculations, etc. that substantiate and justify the request.

**4.4 Engineering Evaluation.** If the fire code official deems an engineering evaluation necessary, it shall be performed and reported by a firm or individual that has been approved by the fire code official. The applicant is responsible for all costs associated with the preparation of the AMM or associated analysis.

**4.5 Review.** Once the Fire Prevention Bureau receives a request for an AMM, a fire code official will review it for completeness. All requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

**4.6 Rejection of Application.** Applications that are not thoroughly completed and applications that have not been submitted with the required fee will be rejected without review. Additionally, applications that do not include sufficient documentation or necessary plans or analyses that substantiate claims of equivalence and compliance with the code will also be rejected.

**4.7 Approval.** If the AMM proposal provides an equivalent level of protection considering all aspects pertaining to the project, the request will be approved. Such approval may be conditional upon implementation of additional requirements listed in the AMM comments that were not part of the original AMM proposal. Approval of the request is based upon several factors, including, but not limited to, the level of equivalency achieved, the effect of the AMM on fire and emergency response, and site conditions. All evaluations will be performed in the context of the specific project being reviewed.

**4.8 Denial.** If the AMM proposed does not provide an equivalent level of protection, the request will be denied. Should the applicant submit a different AMM request for the same project or choose to revise and resubmit the previously denied request, additional fees shall apply.

**4.9 Notification of Determination.** The applicant will be notified upon final determination of proposed AMM. This notification may include additional requirements or comments related to the determination.