



Project Management + Finance & Budget + Sustainability + Retrofitting & Modernization + Energy Efficiency

## FIRE LIFE SAFETY EVALUATION IMPROVEMENTS

For those associations identified as part of the 2018 City & County Fire Life Safety Evaluation (FLSE) Ordinance, it's important to understand that the longer an association waits to make the improvements the more expensive the cost of the improvements. It has been 5 years since the ordinance was established and construction costs have increase about 50% since 2018. For some associations that means cost increases in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and for others, millions.

Many associations now find themselves in very challenging situations particularly because many of these same buildings are also dealing with building components that have reached the end of their useful lifespan.

Having met the evaluation filing deadline, associations are now required to select and complete one of two improvement options to receive a passing score. Option 1, involves installing a new fire sprinkler system and, in most cases, a new fire alarm system as per building code requirements. On the other hand, Option 2 requires making the building improvements noted in the evaluation results excluding fire sprinkler systems. However, one of the FLSE requirements for Option 2 states that the building's fire alarm system must meet current building code requirements.

Both options come with major financial implications. In most cases, Option 1 improvements will be the more expensive and will take longer to complete the construction work. Each option has a specific construction completion deadline and both options have to be certified as "FLSE complete" by a licensed engineer or architect.

For both options, plans and specifications will have to be prepared and submitted for building permit approval. Plans for Option 1 will take significantly longer to prepare as a sprinkler system will need a new water, fire protection for equipment, fuel storage, back-up generator, space for equipment, etc. and it will also take longer to receive permit approval.

Association FLSE improvement decisions are even more complicated because these same buildings are now considered "aged" buildings. Building structures are designed to last about 80-90 years but building components wear out after 40-50 years and need to be replaced to protect property values. There are opportunities to combine FLSE improvements with component replacement work but for this scenario to prove beneficial, associations must first understand the mental, physical and financial aspects of this kind of construction work in an occupied building.

Adding to the FLSE improvement and building component replacement mix is insurance. Since the FLSE ordinance became active in 2018, the insurance industry has changed dramatically mainly due to extreme weather events. Premiums have skyrocketed and every day insurance carriers are becoming more restrictive.

Some associations are now being forced to deal with FLSE improvements, building component replacement work, and skyrocketing insurance premiums, all at the same time. This is a unique time in Hawaii building history and without professional guidance, boards will be risking their association's financial future.

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