

FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS

1. What is the difference between an Access Road and a Driveway?

An access road serves more than one property or structure. A driveway serves only one structure or property.

2. What is a Turnaround and when do I need to provide one?

A turnaround is an area usually found at the end of a dead end driveway or Fire Department access road with approved dimensions, slope, load capacity and surface sufficient to allow fire engines to safely turn around. This is necessary because it is dangerous and time-consuming to drive fire apparatus in reverse for long distances, and can delay emergency response.

You will need to provide a turnaround if your driveway measures more than 150 feet from the center line of the access road to the furthest point of fire department access to the structure. You may also be required to provide a turnaround if the access road serving your project has a dead-end and is in excess of 150 feet. View our **Standards** website, Standard CFMO-A1 for details.

3. What is a Turnout and when do I need to provide one?

Driveways in excess of 500 feet require turnouts at no more than 500 foot intervals to allow for large fire department vehicles to pass each other or other vehicles when necessary. Turnouts measure at least 8 feet wide by 40 feet long in accordance with our Standard CFMO SD-16, to view this Standard see our **Standards** website.

4. Why do I have to improve my existing driveway and/or the private road leading to my driveway?

The code requires that you provide safe and adequate access for emergency vehicles whenever you develop a parcel or add more than 500 square feet onto an existing structure.

5. What is the maximum grade/slope that the Fire Marshal's Office will allow?

Standard CFMO-A1 and the County Ordinance Code limits the maximum grade for both driveways and access roads to 15 percent. However, on a case-by-case basis our office (with the concurrence of County Land Development Engineering for access roads) may permit up to a maximum 20 percent if no other method is practicable and if consistent with good engineering practices. In no case shall the portion exceeding 15 percent gradient be longer than 300 feet in length, unless there is at least 100 feet at 15 percent or less gradient between each 300 foot section. If your access road and/or driveway is in excess of 15 percent you will be required to provide fire sprinklers throughout your new structure. To view our Standards click on the Related Link below.

6. What are the requirements for a security gate?

Gates across driveways must be approved by the County Fire Marshal's Office to ensure access for emergency vehicles. When open, the gate or its hardware must not obstruct any portion of the required width of the driveway or access road. The responding fire department may require an override key, lock box or breakaway lock so they can open the gate in case of emergency. Gates across access roads are typically not allowed. See our gate Standard CFMO-A3 for details on our **Standards** website.

7. Can my neighborhood install a speed bump in our road to protect our children from speeding drivers?

We recognize that this is a valid concern for residents, however speed bumps delay and can even damage heavy emergency response vehicles, as well as injure responders and patients in ambulances. There are acceptable means of calming traffic that may be appropriate for your situation, however they must be approved by the Fire Marshal and County.

8. What are "Botts dots" and what are they used for?

Blue reflective markers (commonly referred to as "Botts dots") are placed in the street just inside of the centerline of the street to indicate the presence of a fire hydrant. Their color and reflective characteristics help the fire department find hydrants that may be hidden by vegetation or difficult to find at night.