



CITY of LAGUNA WOODS

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*Councilmember*

**Leslie A. Keane**  
*City Manager*

May 9, 2003

Frederick P. Horn  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, California 92701

RE: The February 4, 2003 Grand Jury Report on Wood Roofs

Honorable Frederick P. Horn:

The City of Laguna woods would like to thank the Grand Jury for the opportunity to respond to their findings and recommendations. In accordance with Penal Code 993, the City offers the following response to the "Wood Roofs Are Dangerous" report for Grand Jury consideration:

**Findings:**

1. There is a lack of uniformity in local building codes involving roofs for identical environmental conditions within Orange County.

**Response:** Based on the information provided within the report there would seem to be significant variation in roofing standards from city to city. The City has not performed an analysis of the roofing requirements for other cities in Orange County, nor is City staff familiar with the specific environmental conditions and microclimates that might impact roofing material codes from city to city. Therefore the City would not deny that there seems to be a lack of uniformity in local roofing codes; however the assumption that environmental conditions within Orange County are identical may be too broad.

2. The testing and qualification standards of wood shakes and shingles are below the environmental conditions of Orange County.

**Response:** The City of Laguna Woods has not undertaken a study or tested the specific performance standards of treated wood shakes and shingles. Wood shakes or shingles have not been proposed for use in the City of Laguna Woods; therefore, there has been no need for City staff to assess the effectiveness of those materials. Based on the report provided by the Grand Jury, it would appear that the statement by the Grand Jury is correct.

3. The cities' and County's roofing codes do not adequately take into account the climate, particularly the Santa Ana winds, and topographical conditions unique to Orange County.

**Response:** The finding is perhaps too broad in its assertion. The initial report and the first Grand Jury finding indicate that there are inconsistencies in roofing code standards among cities. This could suggest that many cities' roofing standards may not adequately address environmental conditions within Orange County, but perhaps many do. The City of Laguna Woods' Code included a provision for Special Fire Protection District as determined by the Fire Chief, and the requirements are for the installation of Class A roof coverings for all new structures and Class A roof coverings for re-roofing of ten (10.) % or more of the total roof area. These standards exceed the recommendations of the Grand Jury and do take into account environmental conditions.

4. Fire conflagrations stress finite fire fighting resources especially during the period of Santa Ana Winds.

**Response:** The City contracts with Orange County Fire Authority for emergency and fire fighting response and, therefore, is not able to directly comment on the commitment of fire fighting resources during a fire event. The statement seems correct and reflects a common sense understanding of the draw on fire resources during a fire event. The statement is supported by the increased alert status and preventative deployment of equipment during periods of Santa Ana Winds. Furthermore, the provision for the creation of a Special Fire Protection District, as determined by the Fire Chief, and included within the City Code, reflects an effort to reduce the demand on fire resources and supports the Grand Jury finding.

**Recommendations:**

1. Each responding jurisdictional agency should consider amending the building code to require the most fire retardant class of roof covering (Class A) for new construction of all residential structures (Group R) in all fire zones. (Findings 1 through 4)

**Response:** The City's Ordinance No. 02-08 which adopts the 2001 California Building Code also amends the code to require a minimum of Class A roof coverings on all new structures including all residential occupancies (Group R). The City currently complies with the Grand Jury recommendation.

2. Each responding jurisdictional agency should consider amending the building code to require the most fire retardant class of roof covering (Class A) for re-roofing of all residential structures (Group R) in all fire zones, when more than 50 percent of the roof is replaced within one year. (Findings 1 through 4)

**Response:** The City's Ordinance No. 02-08 which adopts the 2001 California Building Code also amends the code to require a minimum of Class A roof coverings for re-roofing of all residential occupancies (Group R) when 10 percent or more of the roof area is re-roofed. The City's code exceeds the provisions contained in the recommendation.

The City of Laguna Woods remains committed to protecting the health and safety of its residents and participating in the discussion of regional issues. If the Grand Jury requires additional clarification on any of the responses provided in this letter, feel free to contact Lauren Barr, Laguna Woods Community Development Director at (949) 639-0521. If there is anything else that my staff or I can assist the Grand Jury with, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Leslie A. Keane, City Manager  
City of Laguna Woods

CC:

City Council  
Lauren Barr, Community Development Director  
Jon Traw, Building Official  
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