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Stray Voltage in the Water *Code Change Proposal*

(Smith Mountain Lake, Virginia, August 22, 2019) On Wednesday August 21, 2019 Jim Erler, John Lane and Neil Harrington presented their proposed changes to the Virginia building codes at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) combined workgroup session in Glen Allen, VA. The proposal was carried over to a future session.

Virginia Delegate Kathy Byron, who represents much of the SML region, spoke in support of the proposal. She asked that the workgroup look for effective solutions to the stray voltage problem which is a serious safety hazard to the community. DHCD leadership committed to establishing a team of stakeholders to “deep dive” into the proposal as soon as the current code cycle is wrapped up.

Stray voltage resulting from anomalies in the electric service follow the ground wires and can enter the water through metal parts of a boat lift, jet ski lift or metal pilings. Until a code change is approved and implemented by the Commonwealth, here are a few safety tips.

- Make sure all metal parts of the boat and jet ski lifts are out of the water when people are swimming off the dock.
- Don't swim near the boat or jet ski lift.
- Don't touch a boat or jet ski lift while you are in the water.
- Never swim around the slips in a marina or community dock.

It is a good idea to have a licensed electrician upgrade your dock's electrical service to the latest electric code and install ground fault interrupter technology on all of your dock's circuits. If you have metal pilings, talk to your electrician about effective ways to insure they do not become energized.