

2021 International Existing Building Code®

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PREFACE

Introduction

The *International Existing Building Code*® (IEBC®) establishes minimum requirements for existing buildings using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles intended to encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings while requiring reasonable upgrades and improvements. This 2021 edition is fully compatible with all of the International Codes® (I-Codes®) published by the International Code Council® (ICC®), including the *International Building Code*® (IBC®), *International Energy Conservation Code*® (IECC®), *International Fire Code*® (IFC®), *International Fuel Gas Code*® (IFGC®), *International Green Construction Code*® (IgCC®), *International Mechanical Code*® (IMC®), *International Plumbing Code*® (IPC®), *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*® (IPSDC®), *International Property Maintenance Code*® (IPMC®), *International Residential Code*® (IRC®), *International Swimming Pool and Spa Code*® (ISpSC®), *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code*® (IWUIC®), *International Zoning Code*® (IZC®) and *International Code Council Performance Code*® (ICCP®).

The I-Codes, including the IEBC, are used in a variety of ways in both the public and private sectors. Most industry professionals are familiar with the I-Codes as the basis of laws and regulations in communities across the US and in other countries. However, the impact of the codes extends well beyond the regulatory arena, as they are used in a variety of nonregulatory settings, including:

- Voluntary compliance programs such as those promoting sustainability, energy efficiency and disaster resistance.
- The insurance industry, to estimate and manage risk, and as a tool in underwriting and rate decisions.
- Certification and credentialing of individuals involved in the fields of building design, construction and safety.
- Certification of building and construction-related products.
- US federal agencies, to guide construction in an array of government-owned properties.
- Facilities management.
- “Best practices” benchmarks for designers and builders, including those who are engaged in projects in jurisdictions that do not have a formal regulatory system or a governmental enforcement mechanism.
- College, university and professional school textbooks and curricula.
- Reference works related to building design and construction.

In addition to the codes themselves, the code development process brings together building professionals on a regular basis. It provides an international forum for discussion and deliberation about building design, construction methods, safety, performance requirements, technological advances and innovative products.

Development

This 2021 edition presents the code as originally issued, with changes reflected in the 2006 through 2018 editions and further changes approved by the ICC Code Development Process through 2019. A new edition such as this is promulgated every 3 years.

This code is founded on principles intended to encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings that adequately protect public health, safety and welfare; provisions that do not unnecessarily increase construction costs; provisions that do not restrict the use of new materials, products or methods of construction; and provisions that do not give preferential treatment to particular types or classes of materials, products or methods of construction.

Maintenance

The IEBC is kept up to date through the review of proposed changes submitted by code enforcement officials, industry representatives, design professionals and other interested parties. Proposed changes are carefully considered through an open code development process in which all interested and affected parties may participate.

The ICC Code Development Process reflects principles of openness, transparency, balance, due process and consensus, the principles embodied in OMB Circular A-119, which governs the federal government's use of private-sector standards. The ICC process is open to anyone; there is no cost to participate, and people can participate without travel cost through the ICC's cloud-based app, cdpAccess®. A broad cross section of interests are represented in the ICC Code Development Process. The codes, which are updated regularly, include safeguards that allow for emergency action when required for health and safety reasons.

In order to ensure that organizations with a direct and material interest in the codes have a voice in the process, the ICC has developed partnerships with key industry segments that support the ICC's important public safety mission. Some code development committee members were nominated by the following industry partners and approved by the ICC Board:

- American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)

The code development committees evaluate and make recommendations regarding proposed changes to the codes. Their recommendations are then subject to public comment and council-wide votes. The ICC's governmental members—public safety officials who have no financial or business interest in the outcome—cast the final votes on proposed changes.

The contents of this work are subject to change through the code development cycles and by any governmental entity that enacts the code into law. For more information regarding the code development process, contact the Codes and Standards Development Department of the ICC.

While the I-Code development procedure is thorough and comprehensive, the ICC, its members and those participating in the development of the codes disclaim any liability resulting from the publication or use of the I-Codes, or from compliance or noncompliance with their provisions. The ICC does not have the power or authority to police or enforce compliance with the contents of this code.

Code Development Committee Responsibilities (Letter Designations in Front of Section Numbers)

In each code development cycle, proposed changes to this code are considered at the Committee Action Hearings by the International Existing Building Code Development Committee. Proposed changes to a code section having a number beginning with a letter in brackets are considered by a different code development committee. For example, proposed changes to code sections that are preceded by the designation [F] (e.g., [F] 1504.2) are considered by the International Fire Code Development Committee at the Committee Action Hearings.

The content of sections in this code that begin with a letter designation is maintained by another code development committee in accordance with the following:

- [A] = Administrative Code Development Committee;
- [BE] = IBC—Means of Egress Code Development Committee;
- [BG] = IBC—General Code Development Committee;
- [BS] = IBC—Structural Code Development Committee;

- [E] = International Commercial Energy Conservation Code Development Committee or International Residential Energy Conservation Code Development Committee;
- [F] = International Fire Code Development Committee;
- [FG] = International Fuel Gas Code Development Committee;
- [M] = International Mechanical Code Development Committee; and
- [P] = International Plumbing Code Development Committee.

For the development of the 2024 edition of the I-Codes, there will be two groups of code development committees and they will meet in separate years, as shown in the following Code Development Hearings Table.

Code change proposals submitted for code sections that have a letter designation in front of them will be heard by the respective committee responsible for such code sections. Because different committees hold Committee Action Hearings in different years, it is possible that some proposals for this code will be heard by a committee in a different year than the year in which the primary committee for this code meets. In the case of the IEBC, the primary committees that maintain this code will meet in 2022.

For instance, Section 1501.3 is designated as the responsibility of the IBC—General Code Development Committee. This committee will conduct its code development hearings in 2021 to consider all code change proposals to the *International Building Code* and any portions of other codes that it is responsible for, including Section 1501.3 of the IEBC and other general provisions of the IEBC (designated with [BG] in front of those sections). Therefore, any proposals received for Section 1501.3 will be considered in 2021 by the IBC—General Code Development Committee.

It is very important that anyone submitting code change proposals understand which code development committee is responsible for the section of the code that is the subject of the code change proposal. For further information on the Code Development Committee responsibilities, please visit the ICC website at www.iccsafe.org/current-code-development-cycle.

CODE DEVELOPMENT HEARINGS

Group A Codes (Heard in 2021, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 11, 2021)	Group B Codes (Heard in 2022, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 10, 2022)
International Building Code – Egress (Chapters 10, 11, Appendix E) – Fire Safety (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 14, 26) – General (Chapters 2–6, 12, 27–33, Appendices A, B, C, D, K, N)	Administrative Provisions (Chapter 1 of all codes except IECC, IRC and IgCC, IBC Appendix O, the appendices titled “Board of Appeals” for all codes except IECC, IRC, IgCC, ICCPC and IZC, administrative updates to currently referenced standards, and designated definitions)
International Fire Code	International Building Code – Structural (Chapters 15–25, Appendices F, G, H, I, J, L, M)
International Fuel Gas Code	International Existing Building Code
International Mechanical Code	International Energy Conservation Code—Commercial
International Plumbing Code	International Energy Conservation Code—Residential – IECC—Residential – IRC—Energy (Chapter 11)
International Property Maintenance Code	International Green Construction Code (Chapter 1)
International Private Sewage Disposal Code	International Residential Code – IRC—Building (Chapters 1–10, Appendices AE, AF, AH, AJ, AK, AL, AM, AO, AQ, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW)
International Residential Code – IRC—Mechanical (Chapters 12–23) – IRC—Plumbing (Chapters 25–33, Appendices AG, AI, AN, AP)	
International Swimming Pool and Spa Code	
International Wildland-Urban Interface Code	
International Zoning Code	

Note: Proposed changes to the ICCPC will be heard by the code development committee noted in brackets [] in the text of the ICCPC.

Marginal Markings

Solid vertical lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a technical change from the requirements of the 2018 edition. Deletion indicators in the form of an arrow (➡) are provided in the margin where an entire section, exception or table has been deleted or an item in a list of items or row of a table has been deleted.

A single asterisk [*] placed in the margin indicates that text or a table has been relocated within the code. A double asterisk [**] placed in the margin indicates that the text or table immediately following it has been relocated there from elsewhere in the code. The following table indicates such relocations in the 2021 edition of the IEBC.

RELOCATIONS	
2021 LOCATION	2018 LOCATION
303	1106
307	502.6, 503.14, 803.4.3, 1104
308	502.7, 503.15, 804, 1105
1009.1	809.1
1501.2.1	705.2

Coordination of the International Codes

The coordination of technical provisions is one of the strengths of the ICC family of model codes. The codes can be used as a complete set of complementary documents, which will provide users with full integration and coordination of technical provisions. Individual codes can also be used in subsets or as stand-alone documents. To make sure that each individual code is as complete as possible, some technical provisions that are relevant to more than one subject area are duplicated in some of the model codes. This allows users maximum flexibility in their application of the I-Codes.

Italicized Terms

Terms italicized in code text, other than document titles, are defined in Chapter 2. The terms selected to be italicized have definitions that the user should read carefully to better understand the code. Where italicized, the Chapter 2 definition applies. If not italicized, common-use definitions apply.

Adoption

The ICC maintains a copyright in all of its codes and standards. Maintaining copyright allows the ICC to fund its mission through sales of books, in both print and electronic formats. The ICC welcomes adoption of its codes by jurisdictions that recognize and acknowledge the ICC's copyright in the code, and further acknowledge the substantial shared value of the public/private partnership for code development between jurisdictions and the ICC.

The ICC also recognizes the need for jurisdictions to make laws available to the public. All I-Codes and I-Standards, along with the laws of many jurisdictions, are available for free in a nondownloadable form on the ICC's website. Jurisdictions should contact the ICC at adoptions@iccsafe.org to learn how to adopt and distribute laws based on the IEBC in a manner that provides necessary access, while maintaining the ICC's copyright.

To facilitate adoption, several sections of this code contain blanks for fill-in information that needs to be supplied by the adopting jurisdiction as part of the adoption legislation. For this code, please see:

Section 101.1 Insert: **[NAME OF JURISDICTION]**

Section 103.1 Insert: **[NAME OF DEPARTMENT]**

Effective Use of the International Existing Building Code

The IEBC is a model code in the International Code family of codes intended to provide requirements for repair and alternative approaches for alterations, changes of occupancy and additions to existing buildings. A large number of existing buildings and structures do not comply with the current building code requirements for new construction. Although many of these buildings are potentially salvageable, rehabilitation is often cost-prohibitive because compliance with all the requirements for new construction could require extensive changes that go well beyond the value of the building or the original scope of the alteration. At the same time, it is necessary to regulate construction in existing buildings that undergo additions, alterations, extensive repairs or change of occupancy. Such activity represents an opportunity to ensure that new construction complies with the current building codes and that existing conditions are maintained, at a minimum, to their current level of compliance or are improved as required to meet basic safety levels. To accomplish this objective, and to make the alteration process easier, this code allows for options for controlled departure from full compliance with the International Codes dealing with new construction, while maintaining basic levels for fire safety, structural and life safety features of the rehabilitated building.

This code provides three main options for a designer in dealing with alterations of existing buildings. These are laid out in Section 301 of this code:

OPTION 1: Work for alteration, change of occupancy or addition of all existing buildings shall be done in accordance with the Prescriptive Compliance Method given in Chapter 5. It should be noted that this method originates from the former Chapter 34 of the *International Building Code* (2012 and earlier editions).

OPTION 2: Work for alteration, change of occupancy or addition of all existing buildings shall be done in accordance with the Work Area Compliance Method given in Chapters 6 through 12.

OPTION 3: Work for alteration, change of occupancy or addition of all existing buildings shall be done in accordance with the Performance Compliance Method given in Chapter 13. It should be noted that this option was also provided in the former Chapter 34 of the *International Building Code* (2012 and earlier editions).

Under limited circumstances, a building alteration can be made to comply with the laws under which the building was originally built, as long as the accessibility requirements are met, there has been no substantial structural damage and there will be limited structural alteration. Flood hazard provisions also must still be addressed where there is a substantial improvement.

Note that all repairs must comply with Chapter 4 and all relocated buildings are addressed by Chapter 14.

ARRANGEMENT AND FORMAT OF THE 2021 IEBC

Before applying the requirements of the IEBC, it is beneficial to understand its arrangement and format. The IEBC, like other codes published by ICC, is arranged and organized to follow logical steps that generally occur during a plan review or inspection.

The following table shows how the IEBC is divided. The ensuing chapter-by-chapter synopsis details the scope and intent of the provisions of the IEBC.

CHAPTER TOPICS	
Chapter	Subjects
1–2	Administrative Requirements and Definitions
3	Provisions for all Compliance Methods
4	Repairs
5	Prescriptive Compliance Method for Existing Buildings
6–12	Work Area Compliance Method for Existing Buildings
13	Performance Compliance Method for Existing Buildings
14	Relocated Buildings
15	Construction Safeguards
16	Referenced Standards
Appendix A	Guidelines for Seismic Retrofit of Existing Buildings
Appendix B	Supplementary Accessibility Requirements for Existing Buildings
Appendix C	Guidelines for Wind Retrofit of Existing Buildings
Appendix D	Board of Appeals
Resource A	Guidelines on Fire Ratings of Archaic Materials and Assemblies

Chapter 1 Scope and Administration

This chapter contains provisions for the application, enforcement and administration of subsequent requirements of the code. In addition to establishing the scope of the code, Chapter 1 identifies which buildings and structures come under its purview. Chapter 1 is largely concerned with maintaining “due process of law” in enforcing the regulations contained in the body of the code. Only through careful observation of the administrative provisions can the code official reasonably expect to demonstrate that “equal protection under the law” has been provided.

Chapter 2 Definitions

All defined terms in the code are provided in Chapter 2. While a defined term may only be used in one chapter or another, the meaning provided in Chapter 2 is applicable throughout the code.

Where understanding of a term’s definition is especially key to or necessary for understanding of a particular code provision, the term is shown in italics wherever it appears in the code. This is true only for those terms that have a meaning that is unique to the code. In other words, the generally understood meaning of a term or phrase might not be sufficient or consistent with the meaning prescribed by the code; therefore, it is essential that the code-defined meaning be known.

Guidance regarding tense, gender and plurality of defined terms as well as guidance regarding terms not defined in this code is also provided.

Chapter 3 Provisions for All Compliance Methods

This chapter serves several purposes. The main role is to explain the three compliance options available in the code. Clarification is provided as to how provisions in other I-Codes related to repairs, alterations, additions, relocation and changes in occupancy must also be addressed unless they conflict with the IEBC. In that case, the IEBC takes precedence. In addition, this chapter also lays out the methods to be used for seismic design and evaluation throughout the IEBC. There are also several issues that are addressed globally for all methods for consistent application including storm shelters, accessibility, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detection and exterior wall coverings.

Chapter 4 Repairs

Chapter 4 governs the repair of existing buildings. The provisions define conditions under which repairs may be made using materials and methods like those of the original construction or the extent to which repairs must comply with requirements for new buildings.

This chapter, like Chapter 14 related to relocated or moved buildings, is independent from the three methods presented by this code.

Chapter 5 Prescriptive Compliance Method

This chapter provides one of the three main options of compliance available in the IEBC for buildings and structures undergoing alteration, addition or change of occupancy.

Chapter 6 Classification of Work

This chapter provides an overview of the Work Area Method available as an option for rehabilitation of a building. The chapter defines the different classifications of alterations and provides general requirements for alterations, change of occupancy, additions and historic buildings. Detailed requirements for all of these are given in subsequent Chapters 7 through 12.

Chapter 7 Alterations—Level 1

This chapter provides the technical requirements for those existing buildings that undergo Level 1 alterations as described in Section 503, which includes replacement or covering of existing materials, elements, equipment or fixtures using new materials for the same purpose. This chapter, similar to other chapters of this code, covers all building-related subjects, such as structural, mechanical, plumbing and electrical as well as the fire and life safety issues when the alterations are classified as Level 1. The purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed requirements and provisions to identify the required improvements in the existing building elements, building spaces and building structural system. This chapter is distinguished from Chapters 8 and 9 by only involving replacement of building components with new components. In contrast, Level 2 alterations involve more space reconfiguration and Level 3 alterations involve more extensive space reconfiguration, exceeding 50 percent of the building area.

Chapter 8 Alterations—Level 2

Like Chapter 7, the purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed requirements and provisions to identify the required improvements in the existing building elements, building spaces and building structural system when a building is being altered. This chapter is distinguished from Chapters 7 and 9 by involving space reconfiguration that could be up to and including 50 percent of the area of the building. In contrast, Level 1 alterations (Chapter 7) do not involve space reconfiguration, and Level 3 alterations (Chapter 9) involve extensive space reconfiguration that exceeds 50 percent of the building area. Depending on the nature of alteration work, its location within the building and whether it encompasses one or more tenants, improvements and upgrades could be required for the open floor penetrations, sprinkler system or the installation of additional means of egress such as stairs or fire escapes.

Chapter 9 Alterations—Level 3

This chapter provides the technical requirements for those existing buildings that undergo Level 3 alterations. The purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed requirements and provisions to identify the required improvements in the existing building elements, building spaces and building structural system. This chapter is distinguished from Chapters 7 and 8 by involving alterations that cover 50 percent of the aggregate area of the building. In contrast, Level 1 alterations do not involve space reconfiguration and Level 2 alterations involve extensive space reconfiguration that does not exceed 50 percent of the building area. Depending on the nature of alteration work, its location within the building and whether it encompasses one or more tenants, improvements and upgrades could be required for the open floor penetrations, sprinkler system or the installation of additional means of egress such as stairs or fire escapes. At times and under certain situations, this chapter also intends to improve the safety of certain building features beyond the work area and in other parts of the building where no alteration work might be taking place.

Chapter 10 Change of Occupancy

The purpose of this chapter is to provide regulations for the circumstances when an existing building is subject to a change of occupancy or a change of occupancy classification. A change of occupancy is not to be confused with a change of occupancy classification. The IBC defines different occupancy classifications in Chapter 3 and special occupancy requirements in Chapter 4. Within specific occupancy classifications, there can be many different types of actual activities that can take place. For instance, a Group A-3 occupancy classification deals with a wide variation of different types of activities, including bowling alleys and courtrooms, indoor tennis courts and dance halls. When a facility changes use from, for example, a bowling alley to a dance hall, the occupancy classification remains A-3, but the different uses could lead to drastically different code requirements. Therefore, this chapter deals with the special circumstances that are associated with a change in the use of a building within the same occupancy classification as well as a change of occupancy classification.

Chapter 11 Additions

Chapter 11 provides the requirements for additions, which correlate to the code requirements for new construction. There are, however, some exceptions that are specifically stated within this chapter. An *“Addition”* is defined in Chapter 2 as “an extension or increase in the floor area, number of stories or height of a building or structure.” Chapter 11 contains the minimum requirements for an addition that is not separated from the existing building by a fire wall.

Chapter 12 Historic Buildings

This chapter provides some exceptions from code requirements when the building in question has historic value. The most important criterion for application of this chapter is that the building must be essentially accredited as being of historic significance by a state or local authority after careful review of the historical value of the building. Most, if not all, states have such authorities, as do many local jurisdictions. The agencies with such authority can be located at the state or local government level or through the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Other considerations include the structural condition of the building (i.e., is the building structurally sound), its proposed use, its impact on life safety and how the intent of the code, if not the letter, will be achieved.

Chapter 13 Performance Compliance Methods

This chapter allows for existing buildings to be evaluated so as to show that alterations or a change of occupancy, while not meeting new construction requirements, will improve the current existing situation. Provisions are based on a numerical scoring system involving 21 various safety parameters and the degree of code compliance for each issue.

Chapter 14 Relocated or Moved Buildings

Chapter 14 is applicable to any building that is moved or relocated. This chapter, like the chapter on repairs, is independent from the three methods presented in this code.

Chapter 15 Construction Safeguards

The building construction process involves a number of known and unanticipated hazards. Chapter 15 establishes specific regulations in order to minimize the risk to the public and adjacent property. Some construction failures have resulted during the initial stages of grading, excavation and demolition. During these early stages, poorly designed and installed sheeting and shoring have resulted in ditch and embankment cave-ins. Also, inadequate underpinning of adjoining existing structures or careless removal of existing structures has produced construction failures.

There are also several fire safety and means of egress issues addressed by this chapter. This chapter is also consistent with Chapter 33 of the IBC and IFC.

Chapter 16 Referenced Standards

The code contains numerous references to standards that are used to regulate materials and methods of construction. Chapter 16 contains a comprehensive list of all standards that are referenced in the code. The standards are part of the code to the extent of the reference to the standard. Compliance with the referenced standard is necessary for compliance with this code. By providing specifically adopted standards, the construction and installation requirements necessary for compliance with the code can be readily determined. The basis for code compliance is, therefore, established and available on an equal basis to the building code official, contractor, designer and owner.

Chapter 16 is organized in a manner that makes it easy to locate specific standards. It lists all of the referenced standards, alphabetically, by acronym of the promulgating agency of the standard. Each agency's standards are then listed in either alphabetical or numeric order based upon the standard identification. The list also contains the title of the standard; the edition (date) of the standard referenced; any addenda included as part of the ICC adoption; and the section or sections of this code that reference the standard.

Appendix A Guidelines for the Seismic Retrofit of Existing Buildings

Appendix A provides guidelines for upgrading the seismic resistance capacity of different types of existing buildings. It is organized into separate chapters which deal with buildings of different types, including unreinforced masonry buildings, reinforced concrete and reinforced masonry wall buildings, and lightframe wood buildings. This appendix includes its own referenced standards.

Appendix B Supplementary Accessibility Requirements for Existing Buildings and Facilities

Chapter 11 of the IBC contains provisions that set forth requirements for accessibility to buildings and their associated sites and facilities for people with physical disabilities. Section 306 addresses accessibility provisions and alternatives permitted in existing buildings. Appendix B was added to address accessibility in construction for items that are not typically enforceable through the traditional building code enforcement process.

Appendix C Guidelines for the Wind Retrofit of Existing Buildings

This appendix is intended to provide guidance for retrofitting existing structures to strengthen their resistance to wind forces. This appendix is similar in scope to Appendix A which addresses seismic retrofits for existing buildings except that the subject matter is related to wind retrofits. These retrofits are voluntary measures that serve to better protect the public and reduce damage from high wind events for existing buildings.

The purpose of the appendix is to provide prescriptive alternatives for addressing retrofit of buildings in high-wind areas. Currently there are two chapters which deal with the retrofit of gable ends and the fastening of roof decks, Appendix Chapters C1 and C2, respectively. This appendix includes its own referenced standards.

Appendix D Board of Appeals

Section 112 of Chapter 1 requires the establishment of a board of appeals to hear appeals regarding determinations made by the code official. Appendix D provides qualification standards for members of the board as well as operational procedures of such board.

Resource A Guidelines on Fire Ratings of Archaic Materials and Assemblies

In the process of repair and alteration of existing buildings, based on the nature and the extent of the work, the IEBC might require certain upgrades in the fire-resistance rating of building elements, at which time it becomes critical for the designers and the code officials to be able to determine the fire-resistance rating of the existing building elements as part of the overall evaluation for the assessment of the need for improvements. This resource document provides a guideline for such an evaluation for fire-resistance rating of archaic materials that is not typically found in the modern model building codes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION	1-1	308 Carbon Monoxide Detection	3-6
PART 1—SCOPE AND APPLICATION	1-1	309 Additions and Replacements of Exterior Wall Coverings and Exterior Wall Envelopes	3-6
Section			
101 Scope and General Requirements	1-1		
102 Applicability	1-1		
PART 2—ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT	1-2	CHAPTER 4 REPAIRS	4-1
103 Code Compliance Agency	1-2	Section	
104 Duties and Powers of Code Official	1-2	401 General	4-1
105 Permits	1-4	402 Building Elements and Materials	4-1
106 Construction Documents	1-5	403 Fire Protection	4-1
107 Temporary Structures and Uses	1-7	404 Means of Egress	4-1
108 Fees	1-7	405 Structural	4-1
109 Inspections	1-7	406 Electrical	4-2
110 Certificate of Occupancy	1-8	407 Mechanical	4-2
111 Service Utilities	1-9	408 Plumbing	4-3
112 Means of Appeals	1-9	CHAPTER 5 PRESCRIPTIVE COMPLIANCE METHOD	5-1
113 Violations	1-9	Section	
114 Stop Work Order	1-10	501 General	5-1
115 Unsafe Structures and Equipment	1-10	502 Additions	5-1
116 Emergency Measures	1-10	503 Alterations	5-2
117 Demolition	1-11	504 Fire Escapes	5-4
CHAPTER 2 DEFINITIONS	2-1	505 Windows and Emergency Escape Openings	5-5
Section		506 Change of Occupancy	5-5
201 General	2-1	507 Historic Buildings	5-6
202 General Definitions	2-1	CHAPTER 6 CLASSIFICATION OF WORK	6-1
CHAPTER 3 PROVISIONS FOR ALL COMPLIANCE METHODS	3-1	Section	
Section		601 General	6-1
301 Administration	3-1	602 Alteration—Level 1	6-1
302 General Provisions	3-1	603 Alteration—Level 2	6-1
303 Storm Shelters	3-2	604 Alteration—Level 3	6-1
304 Structural Design Loads and Evaluation and Design Procedures	3-2	605 Change of Occupancy	6-1
305 In-Situ Load Tests	3-3	606 Additions	6-1
306 Accessibility for Existing Buildings	3-3	607 Historic Buildings	6-1
307 Smoke Alarms	3-5	CHAPTER 7 ALTERATIONS—LEVEL 1	7-1
		Section	
		701 General	7-1
		702 Building Elements and Materials	7-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

703 Fire Protection 7-2
704 Means of Egress 7-2
705 Reroofing 7-2
706 Structural 7-3
707 Electrical 7-4
708 Energy Conservation 7-4

CHAPTER 8 ALTERATIONS—LEVEL 2..... 8-1

Section

801 General 8-1
802 Building Elements and Materials 8-1
803 Fire Protection 8-3
804 Means of Egress 8-5
805 Structural 8-9
806 Electrical 8-10
807 Mechanical 8-10
808 Plumbing 8-11
809 Energy Conservation 8-11

CHAPTER 9 ALTERATIONS—LEVEL 3..... 9-1

Section

901 General 9-1
902 Special Use and Occupancy 9-1
903 Building Elements and Materials 9-1
904 Fire Protection 9-2
905 Means of Egress 9-3
906 Structural 9-3
907 Energy Conservation 9-3

CHAPTER 10 CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY 10-1

Section

1001 General 10-1
1002 Special Use and Occupancy 10-1
1003 Building Elements and Materials 10-2
1004 Fire Protection 10-2
1005 Means of Egress 10-2
1006 Structural 10-2
1007 Electrical 10-2
1008 Mechanical 10-3
1009 Plumbing 10-3
1010 Other Requirements 10-3
1011 Change of Occupancy Classification 10-3

CHAPTER 11 ADDITIONS 11-1

Section

1101 General 11-1
1102 Heights and Areas 11-1
1103 Structural 11-1
1104 Energy Conservation 11-2

CHAPTER 12 HISTORIC BUILDINGS..... 12-1

Section

1201 General 12-1
1202 Repairs 12-1
1203 Fire Safety 12-2
1204 Change of Occupancy 12-2
1205 Structural 12-3
1206 Relocated Buildings 12-3

**CHAPTER 13 PERFORMANCE
COMPLIANCE METHODS..... 13-1**

Section

1301 General 13-1

**CHAPTER 14 RELOCATED OR
MOVED BUILDINGS 14-1**

Section

1401 General 14-1
1402 Requirements 14-1

**CHAPTER 15 CONSTRUCTION
SAFEGUARDS..... 15-1**

Section

1501 General 15-1
1502 Protection of Adjoining Property 15-2
1503 Temporary Use of Streets,
Alleys and Public Property 15-3
1504 Fire Extinguishers 15-3
1505 Means of Egress 15-3
1506 Standpipes 15-3
1507 Automatic Sprinkler System 15-4
1508 Accessibility 15-4
1509 Water Supply for Fire Protection 15-4

CHAPTER 16 REFERENCED STANDARDS 16-1

APPENDIX A GUIDELINES FOR THE SEISMIC RETROFIT OF EXISTING BUILDINGSAPPENDIX A-1

CHAPTER A1 SEISMIC STRENGTHENING PROVISIONS FOR UNREINFORCED MASONRY BEARING WALL BUILDINGSAPPENDIX A-1

Section

A101 Purpose APPENDIX A-1
 A102 Scope APPENDIX A-1
 A103 Definitions APPENDIX A-1
 A104 Symbols and Notations APPENDIX A-2
 A105 General Requirements APPENDIX A-3
 A106 Materials Requirements APPENDIX A-4
 A107 Quality Control APPENDIX A-5
 A108 Design Strengths APPENDIX A-6
 A109 Analysis and Design Procedure APPENDIX A-6
 A110 General Procedure APPENDIX A-7
 A111 Special Procedure APPENDIX A-8
 A112 Analysis and Design APPENDIX A-11
 A113 Detailed Building System
 Design Requirements APPENDIX A-13
 A114 Walls of Unburned Clay,
 Adobe or Stone Masonry APPENDIX A-14

CHAPTER A2 EARTHQUAKE HAZARD REDUCTION IN EXISTING REINFORCED CONCRETE AND REINFORCED MASONRY WALL BUILDINGS WITH FLEXIBLE DIAPHRAGMS.....APPENDIX A-15

Section

A201 Purpose APPENDIX A-15
 A202 Scope APPENDIX A-15
 A203 Definitions APPENDIX A-15
 A204 Symbols and Notations APPENDIX A-15
 A205 General Requirements APPENDIX A-15
 A206 Analysis and Design APPENDIX A-16
 A207 Materials of Construction APPENDIX A-17

CHAPTER A3 PRESCRIPTIVE PROVISIONS FOR SEISMIC STRENGTHENING OF CRIPPLE WALLS AND SILL PLATE ANCHORAGE OF LIGHT, WOOD-FRAME RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS APPENDIX A-19

Section

A301 General APPENDIX A-19
 A302 Definitions APPENDIX A-19
 A303 Structural Weaknesses APPENDIX A-20
 A304 Strengthening Requirements APPENDIX A-20

CHAPTER A4 EARTHQUAKE RISK REDUCTION IN WOOD-FRAME RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS WITH SOFT, WEAK OR OPEN FRONT WALLS..... APPENDIX A-37

Section

A401 General APPENDIX A-37
 A402 Definitions APPENDIX A-37
 A403 Analysis and Design APPENDIX A-37
 A404 Prescriptive Measures
 for Weak Story APPENDIX A-39
 A405 Materials of Construction APPENDIX A-40
 A406 Construction Documents APPENDIX A-40
 A407 Quality Control APPENDIX A-41

CHAPTER A5 REFERENCED STANDARDS APPENDIX A-43

Section

A501 Referenced Standards APPENDIX A-43

APPENDIX B SUPPLEMENTARY ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES APPENDIX B-1

Section

B101 Qualified Historic Buildings
 and Facilities APPENDIX B-1
 B102 Fixed Transportation Facilities
 and Stations APPENDIX B-1
 B103 Dwelling Units and Sleeping
 Units APPENDIX B-2
 B104 Referenced Standards APPENDIX B-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**APPENDIX C GUIDELINES FOR THE WIND
RETROFIT OF EXISTING
BUILDINGSAPPENDIX C-1**

**CHAPTER C1 GABLE END RETROFIT
FOR HIGH-WIND
AREAS.....APPENDIX C-1**

Section

- C101 General APPENDIX C-1
- C102 Definitions..... APPENDIX C-1
- C103 Materials of Construction APPENDIX C-2
- C104 Retrofitting Gable End Walls to
Enhance Wind Resistance APPENDIX C-4

**CHAPTER C2 ROOF DECK FASTENING
FOR HIGH-WIND
AREAS.....APPENDIX C-21**

Section

- C201 General APPENDIX C-21
- C202 Roof Deck Attachment
for Wood Roofs..... APPENDIX C-21

**CHAPTER C3 REFERENCED
STANDARDSAPPENDIX C-23**

Section

- C301 Referenced Standards APPENDIX C-23

**APPENDIX D BOARD OF
APPEALS APPENDIX D-1**

Section

- D101 General APPENDIX D-1

**RESOURCE A GUIDELINES ON FIRE
RATINGS OF ARCHAIC
MATERIALS AND
ASSEMBLIES..... RESOURCE A-1**

Section

- 1 Fire-related Performance of Archaic
Materials and Assemblies RESOURCE A-2
- 2 Building Evaluation..... RESOURCE A-3
- 3 Final Evaluation and Design
Solution RESOURCE A-6
- 4 Summary RESOURCE A-13
- Appendix RESOURCE A-15
- Resource A Table of Contents RESOURCE A-15
- Bibliography RESOURCE A-134

INDEX.....INDEX-1