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# PREFACE

## Introduction

Internationally, code officials recognize the need for a modern, up-to-date residential code addressing the design and construction of one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses. The *International Residential Code*<sup>®</sup>, in this 2003 edition, is designed to meet these needs through model code regulations that safeguard the public health and safety in all communities, large and small.

This comprehensive, stand-alone residential code establishes minimum regulations for one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses using prescriptive provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles that make possible the use of new materials and new building designs. This 2003 edition is fully compatible with all the *International Codes* (“I-Codes”) published by the International Code Council<sup>®</sup> (ICC<sup>®</sup>), including the *International Building Code*<sup>®</sup>, *ICC Electrical Code*, *International Energy Conservation Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Existing Building Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Fire Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Fuel Gas Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Mechanical Code*<sup>®</sup>, *ICC Performance Code*, *International Plumbing Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Property Maintenance Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Urban-Wildland Interface Code* and *International Zoning Code*<sup>®</sup>.

The *International Residential Code* provisions provide many benefits, among which is the model code development process that offers an international forum for residential construction professionals to discuss prescriptive code requirements. This forum provides an excellent arena to debate proposed revisions. This model code also encourages international consistency in the application of provisions.

## Development

The first edition of the *International Residential Code* (2000) was the culmination of an effort initiated in 1996 by a development committee appointed by the ICC and consisting of representatives of the three statutory members of the International Code Council: Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI) and representatives from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). The intent was to draft a comprehensive, stand-alone residential code consistent with and inclusive of the scope of the existing model codes. Technical content of the 1998 *International One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code* and the latest model codes promulgated by BOCA, ICBO, SBCCI and ICC was utilized as the basis for the development, followed by public hearings in 1998 and 1999 to consider proposed changes. This 2003 edition presents the code as originally issued, with changes approved through the ICC Code Development Process through 2002 and residential electrical revisions based on the 2002 *National Electrical Code*<sup>®</sup> (NFPA-70). A new edition such as this is promulgated every three years.

Fuel gas provisions have been included through an agreement with the American Gas Association (AGA). Electrical provisions have been included through an agreement with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

With the development and publication of the family of *International Codes* in 2000, the continued development and maintenance of the model codes individually promulgated by BOCA (“BOCA National Codes”), ICBO (“Uniform Codes”) and SBCCI (“Standard Codes”) was discontinued. This 2003 *International Residential Code*, as well as its predecessor – the 2000 edition, is intended to be the successor residential code to those codes previously developed by BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI.

The development of a single set of comprehensive and coordinated family of *International Codes* was a significant milestone in the development of regulations for the built environment. The timing of this publication mirrors a milestone in the change in structure of the model codes, namely, the pending consolidation of BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI into the ICC. The activities and services previously provided by the individual model code organizations will be the responsibility of the consolidated ICC.

This code is founded on principles intended to establish provisions consistent with the scope of a residential code that adequately protects 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.

## Adoption

The *International Residential Code* is available for adoption and use by jurisdictions internationally. Its use within a governmental jurisdiction is intended to be accomplished through adoption by reference in accordance with proceedings establishing the jurisdiction’s laws. At the time of adoption, jurisdictions should insert the appropriate information in provisions requiring specific local information, such as the name of the adopting jurisdiction. These locations are shown in bracketed words in small capital letters in the code and in the sample ordinance. The sample adoption ordinance on page v addresses several key elements of a code adoption ordinance, including the information required for insertion into the code text.

## Maintenance

The *International Residential Code* is kept up to date through the review of proposed changes submitted by code enforcing 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 contents of this work are subject to change both through the Code Development Cycles and the governmental body that enacts the code into law. For more information regarding the code development process, contact the Code and Standard Development Department of the International Code Council.

The maintenance process for the fuel gas provisions is based upon the process used to maintain the *International Fuel Gas Code*, in conjunction with the American Gas Association. The maintenance process for the electrical provisions is undertaken by the National Fire Protection Association.

While the development procedure of the *International Residential Code* assures the highest degree of care, ICC and the founding members of ICC — BOCA, ICBO, SBCCI — their members and those participating in the development of this code do not accept any liability resulting from compliance or noncompliance with the provisions because ICC and its founding members do not have the power or authority to police or enforce compliance with the contents of this code. Only the governmental body that enacts the code into law has such authority.

## Letter Designations in Front of Section Numbers

In each code development cycle, proposed changes to this code are considered at the Code Development Hearing by the International Residential Code Development Committee, whose action constitutes a recommendation to the voting membership for final action on the proposed change. Proposed changes to a code section whose number begins with a letter in brackets are considered by a different code development committee. For instance, proposed changes to code sections which have the letter [EB] in front (e.g., [EB] R102.7), are considered by the International Existing Building Code Development Committee at the Code Development Hearing. Where this designation is applicable to the entire content of a main section of the code, the designation appears at the main section number and title and is not repeated at every subsection in that section.

The content of sections in this code which begin with a letter designation are maintained by another code development committee in accordance with the following: [B] = International Building Code Development Committee; [E] = International Energy Conservation Code Development Committee; [EB] = International Existing Building Code Development Committee; [F] = International Fire Code Development Committee; [M] = International Mechanical Code Development Committee; and [P] = International Plumbing Code Development Committee.

## Marginal Markings

Solid vertical lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a technical change from the requirements of the 2000 edition. Deletion indicators (➔) are provided in the margin where a paragraph or item has been deleted.

# ORDINANCE

The *International Codes* are designed and promulgated to be adopted by reference by ordinance. Jurisdictions wishing to adopt the 2003 *International Residential Code* as an enforceable regulation governing one—and two—family dwellings and townhouses should ensure that certain factual information is included in the adopting ordinance at the time adoption is being considered by the appropriate governmental body. The following sample adoption ordinance addresses several key elements of a code adoption ordinance, including the information required for insertion into the code text.

## SAMPLE ORDINANCE FOR ADOPTION OF THE *INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODE*

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

An ordinance of the [JURISDICTION] adopting the 2003 edition of the *International Residential Code*, regulating and governing the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, location, removal and demolition of detached one and two family dwellings and multiple single family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories in height with separate means of egress in the [JURISDICTION]; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; repealing Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_ of the [JURISDICTION] and all other ordinances and parts of the ordinances in conflict therewith.

The [GOVERNING BODY] of the [JURISDICTION] does ordain as follows:

**Section 1.** That a certain document, three (3) copies of which are on file in the office of the [TITLE OF JURISDICTION'S KEEPER OF RECORDS] of [NAME OF JURISDICTION], being marked and designated as the *International Residential Code*, 2003 edition, including Appendix Chapters [FILL IN THE APPENDIX CHAPTERS BEING ADOPTED] (see *International Residential Code* Section R102.5, 2003 edition), as published by the International Code Council, be and is hereby adopted as the Residential Code of the [JURISDICTION], in the State of [STATE NAME] for regulating and governing the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, location, removal and demolition of detached one and two family dwellings and multiple single family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories in height with separate means of egress as herein provided; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; and each and all of the regulations, provisions, penalties, conditions and terms of said Residential Code on file in the office of the [JURISDICTION] are hereby referred to, adopted, and made a part hereof, as if fully set out in this ordinance, with the additions, insertions, deletions and changes, if any, prescribed in Section 2 of this ordinance.

**Section 2.** The following sections are hereby revised:

Section R101.1. Insert: [NAME OF JURISDICTION]

Table R301.2 (1) Insert: [APPROPRIATE DESIGN CRITERIA]

Section P2603.6.1 Insert: [NUMBER OF INCHES IN TWO LOCATIONS]

Section P3103.1 Insert: [NUMBER OF INCHES IN TWO LOCATIONS]

**Section 3.** That Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_ of [JURISDICTION] entitled [FILL IN HERE THE COMPLETE TITLE OF THE ORDINANCE OR ORDINANCES IN EFFECT AT THE PRESENT TIME SO THAT THEY WILL BE REPEALED BY DEFINITE MENTION] and all other ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

**Section 4.** That if any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance is, for any reason, held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The [GOVERNING BODY] hereby declares that it would have passed this ordinance, and each section, subsection, clause or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses and phrases be declared unconstitutional.

**Section 5.** That nothing in this ordinance or in the Residential Code hereby adopted shall be construed to affect any suit or proceeding impending in any court, or any rights acquired, or liability incurred, or any cause or causes of action acquired or existing, under any act or ordinance hereby repealed as cited in Section 2 of this ordinance; nor shall any just or legal right or remedy of any character be lost, impaired or affected by this ordinance.

**Section 6.** That the [JURISDICTION'S KEEPER OF RECORDS] is hereby ordered and directed to cause this ordinance to be published. (An additional provision may be required to direct the number of times the ordinance is to be published and to specify that it is to be in a newspaper in general circulation. Posting may also be required.)

**Section 7.** That this ordinance and the rules, regulations, provisions, requirements, orders and matters established and adopted hereby shall take effect and be in full force and effect [TIME PERIOD] from and after the date of its final passage and adoption.



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# Part I — Administrative

## CHAPTER 1

# ADMINISTRATION

### SECTION R101 TITLE, SCOPE AND PURPOSE

**R101.1 Title.** These provisions shall be known as the *Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings* of [NAME OF JURISDICTION], and shall be cited as such and will be referred to herein as “this code.”

**R101.2 Scope.** The provisions of the *International Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings* shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, removal and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories in height with a separate means of egress and their accessory structures.

**Exception:** Existing buildings undergoing repair, alteration or additions, and change of occupancy shall be permitted to comply with the *International Existing Building Code*.

**R101.3 Purpose.** The purpose of this code is to provide minimum requirements to safeguard the public safety, health and general welfare, through affordability, structural strength, means of egress facilities, stability, sanitation, light and ventilation, energy conservation and safety to life and property from fire and other hazards attributed to the built environment.

### SECTION R102 APPLICABILITY

**R102.1 General.** Where, in any specific case, different sections of this code specify different materials, methods of construction or other requirements, the most restrictive shall govern. Where there is a conflict between a general requirement and a specific requirement, the specific requirement shall be applicable.

**R102.2 Other laws.** The provisions of this code shall not be deemed to nullify any provisions of local, state or federal law.

**R102.3 Application of references.** References to chapter or section numbers, or to provisions not specifically identified by number, shall be construed to refer to such chapter, section or provision of this code.

**R102.4 Referenced codes and standards.** The codes and standards referenced in this code shall be considered part of the requirements of this code to the prescribed extent of each such reference. Where differences occur between provisions of this code and referenced codes and standards, the provisions of this code shall apply.

**Exception:** Where enforcement of a code provision would violate the conditions of the listing of the equipment or ap-

pliance, the conditions of the listing and manufacturer’s instructions shall apply.

**R102.5 Appendices.** Provisions in the appendices shall not apply unless specifically referenced in the adopting ordinance.

**R102.6 Partial invalidity.** In the event any part or provision of this code is held to be illegal or void, this shall not have the effect of making void or illegal any of the other parts or provisions.

**[EB] R102.7 Existing structures.** The legal occupancy of any structure existing on the date of adoption of this code shall be permitted to continue without change, except as is specifically covered in this code, the *International Property Maintenance Code* or the *International Fire Code*, or as is deemed necessary by the building official for the general safety and welfare of the occupants and the public.

**[EB] R102.7.1 Additions, alterations or repairs.** Additions, alterations or repairs to any structure shall conform to that required for a new structure without requiring the existing structure to comply with all of the requirements of this code, unless otherwise stated. Additions, alterations or repairs shall not cause an existing structure to become unsafe or adversely affect the performance of the building.

### SECTION R103 DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING SAFETY

**R103.1 Creation of enforcement agency.** The department of building safety is hereby created and the official in charge thereof shall be known as the building official.

**R103.2 Appointment.** The building official shall be appointed by the chief appointing authority of the jurisdiction.

**R103.3 Deputies.** In accordance with the prescribed procedures of this jurisdiction and with the concurrence of the appointing authority, the building official shall have the authority to appoint a deputy building official, the related technical officers, inspectors, plan examiners and other employees. Such employees shall have powers as delegated by the building official.

### SECTION R104 DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE BUILDING OFFICIAL

**R104.1 General.** The building official is hereby authorized and directed to enforce the provisions of this code. The building official shall have the authority to render interpretations of this code and to adopt policies and procedures in order to clarify the application of its provisions. Such interpretations, poli-